The Perceptions and Engagement with Employability from the view of Undergraduate Sports Students

by

Danielle Prescott

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Central Lancashire

January 2023

RESEARCH STUDENT DECLARATION FORM

Type of Award: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

School: School of Sport and Health Sciences

*Sections marked * delete as appropriate*

1.   Concurrent registration for two or more academic awards

*I declare that while registered as a candidate for the research degree, I have not been a registered candidate or enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institution

2.   Material submitted for another award

*I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award and is solely my own work

3.   Collaboration

Where a candidate's research programme is part of a collaborative project, the thesis must indicate in addition clearly the candidate's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration. Please state below:

*No collaboration

4.   Use of a Proof-reader

*No proof-reading service was used in the compilation of this thesis.

Signature of Candidate:
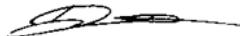
Print name: **Danielle Prescott**

ABSTRACT

The concept of Employability is complex, and this is apparent not only in literature but also in practice. The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain the perceptions of Employability from those who are relatively quiet within literature, i.e., the student. Research in this domain tends to focus on either industry or education with no focus on individuals, or in this instance, students. Understanding student perception can assist in assessing engagement with the concept of Employability. The outcome of this thesis will provide further understanding of those individual perceptions and how these perceptions impact on their engagement with Employability whilst at university.

Based on the subjective nature of this thesis and the need to capture thoughts and feelings, the epistemological and ontological assumptions for a constructivist paradigm aligned to the thesis well. The constructivist paradigm also supported the use of Q Methodology, which features across all 3 studies within this thesis. Q Methodology is a tool that is used to capture qualitative views whilst using mathematical algorithms to conduct the analysis (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Snapshot perceptions of Employability were captured during studies 1 and 2 (Study 1: Staff and Study 2: Students) with Study 3 adopting a longitudinal approach as the data collected in study 3 was captured 3 years after study 2 (Participants in Study 2 also featured in Study 3). The aim of utilising Q Methodology was to capture views on Employability perceptions, so to understand the occurrences between Study 2 and 3, a semi-structured interview was also introduced in Study 3 to address the element of this thesis focussed on engagement.

The findings from this thesis have highlighted the differences of perception regarding Employability and the disparity of these perceptions between undergraduate sports students and higher education staff. In particular, the findings from study 3 showed that perceptions of Employability changed throughout their undergraduate journey, and all but 1 participant within this study now share a similar view of Employability even though their accounts of engagement differed throughout their university programme.

The student voice is relatively quiet within Employability literature, buried within an education sector that without them, would not exist. Within this thesis, the student perception will be given a platform within the context of Employability to understand how they see the concept during their time in Higher Education. Unlike any other study, Employability perceptions from students will not only be captured when they first enter Higher Education but will be revisited within the first 12 months of becoming graduates. Students are only one stakeholder in the concept of Employability, therefore within this research, staff perception has also been captured. Staff perception is significant due to the influence over student beliefs and how students engage during their time at university (Sin, Tavares and Amaral, 2019). This thesis also adds original contribution to knowledge via the methodology used to capture this information. Q methodology is a way to obtain subjective viewpoints (Watts and Stenner, 2012) and therefore a good fit for the subject of Employability, yet this methodology has rarely been used alongside the concept. Following further understanding around Employability perception, coupled with a longitudinal approach, this will then allow for further understanding around student engagement. In the final phase of this research, students will repeat a Q-Sort construction, and revisit their original Q-Sort before being interviewed to reflect on their engagement activities during their academic journey. Conclusions were formed to distinguish patterns and links between perceptions of Employability, staff influence and how these change and impact on student engagement throughout their undergraduate programme. From these findings the creation and instructions of implementing 2 distinct models (The Process of Employability and Collaborative Employability (CE) Model) have been included to proactively encourage a collaborative approach to employability within the final chapter of this thesis. From the literature available, there is no evidence to suggest that a longitudinal study considering Employability perceptions and student engagement whilst utilising Q Methodology has been conducted from the perspective of students studying sport.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To say this journey has been hard is a huge understatement, but I got there, eventually! Through the ups and downs of life and the constant changes that come with that, it's been a long 9 years, but to finally get this over the line is a feeling I can't describe. Submitting this thesis is not only a milestone, but a huge personal achievement as at times it seemed like this day would never come.

To all the staff who have been part of this journey (and it's a lot), I would like to say Thank You! Each person has contributed in some way or another. To my friends who have supported me and offered to read through chapters or encouraged me to take some time out, your words and support got me to this point so Thank You!

Clive Palmer and Joe Pryle, the best supervisory team I could ask for and although you stepped in towards the end of this project, wishing you had been there from day 1 is something I wish I could change. Your words of encouragement and your positivity and kindness showed that you believed in me, and that is what I needed, so Thank You!

Finally, and most importantly to Vicki. I'm not sure if you ever realised how much your encouragement and faith in me spurred me on and helped me achieve what I have. Your continued support and willingness to help me in whatever I needed never went unnoticed. Throughout the final stages of this PhD, is where I feel I flourished and a lot of this was due to knowing I had you in my corner. Thank You for being you x

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 THESIS RATIONALE

Employability has been utilised by Higher Education institutions as a significant metric when it comes to student recruitment and determining graduate success to enhance both student numbers and improve institutional reputation. Employability is therefore deemed to play a significant role in university survival and as McCowan (2015, p. 269) states 'when an organisation needs to survive you must ensure that all parties involved are pulling in the same direction'. The quote by McCowan (2015) could apply to the involvement of student knowledge and perception within the concept of Employability, as they are a significant stakeholder within the concept. There is plenty of Employability literature from a Higher Education and industry perspective which will be explored within this thesis, but there is a significant gap when it comes to student perspective. This thesis aims to understand the voice of the stakeholders that until recently seem to have been unheard, the student. At the start of this PhD journey in 2013, there was very little research available around student perception of Employability, with much of the focus being driven by Higher Education institutions and in part, industry. The first important step to narrow this gap, was to understand how students define Employability, what they deem Employability development and how this can impact on engagement levels with Employability opportunities based upon those perceptions. This thesis aims to begin the narrowing of that gap.

1.1 A SIGNIFICANT ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The student voice is relatively quiet within literature, buried within an education sector that without them, would not exist. Within this thesis, the student perception will be given a platform within the context of Employability to understand how they see the concept during their time in Higher Education. Unlike any other study, Employability perceptions from students will not only be captured when they first enter Higher Education but will be revisited within the first 12 months of becoming graduates. Students are only one stakeholder in the concept of Employability, therefore within this research, staff perception has also been captured. Staff perception is significant due to the influence over student beliefs and how students engage during their time at university (Sin, Tavares and Amaral, 2019). This thesis also adds an original contribution to knowledge via the methodology used to capture this

information. Q methodology is a way to obtain subjective viewpoints (Watts and Stenner, 2012) and therefore a good fit for the subject of Employability, yet this methodology has rarely been used alongside the concept. Following further understanding around Employability perception, coupled with a longitudinal approach, this will then allow for further understanding around student engagement. In the final phase of this research which is focussed on understanding perception changes towards Employability and how this has impacted on engagement, students will repeat a Q-Sort construction, and revisit their original Q-Sort before being interviewed to reflect on their engagement activities during their academic journey. Conclusions were formed to distinguish patterns and links between perceptions of Employability, staff influence and how these impact on student engagement throughout their undergraduate programme. From the literature available, there is no evidence to suggest that a longitudinal study considering Employability perceptions and student engagement whilst utilising Q Methodology has been conducted from the perspective of students studying sport.

1.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this thesis is to develop an understanding of what Employability means to undergraduate sport students and assess how this may impact their engagement with Employability. To meet this aim, the following objectives need to be achieved:

1. Review conceptualisations of Employability and student engagement.
2. Explore undergraduate Sports Students knowledge and perceptions of Employability.
3. Identify if there is a shared understanding and perception of Employability within and amongst relevant Higher Education Teaching Staff within Sport.
4. Investigate the key influences on undergraduate student engagement with Employability throughout their student journey.

1.3 THE COMPLEXITIES OF EMPLOYABILITY

The understanding of Employability is highly contested, and this is evidenced throughout literature. Bennett, Richardson, Mahat, Coates, MacKinnon and Schmidt (2015) believe that the various conceptualisations of Employability reflect disparity in the underpinning beliefs about what, why and for whom it is important. The view of Bennett *et al.* (2015) is also noticeable in earlier literature from Hugh-Jones, Sutherland and Cross (2006) who challenge the idea that Employability may never be fully understood due to the perceptions of the many stakeholders involved. The way in which Employability is used as a term is complex and can be misunderstood. One reason for this is due to the terms 'employment' and 'Employability' being utilised interchangeably from both an industry perspective and within literature (Insa, Gonzalez and Inesta, 2016). Berntson (2008) and Muffels and Luijkx (2008) state that the concept of Employability holds a prominent place in both the academic and public discourse on mobile and flexible labour markets. Although there is a trail of Employability development over time, which will be discussed within Chapter 2, there is still an apparent overlap when it comes to employment and Employability, which could be the cause of confusion and lack of clarity when understanding the concept. The complex nature of Employability is highlighted further through the different variations of how Employability is determined and measured across various industries based upon stakeholder perspectives (Insa, Gonzalez and Inesta, 2016). Evidence and further scrutiny of these perspectives will be discussed within Chapter 3.

Defining Employability has been described as complex and often open to misinterpretation by different stakeholders (Harvey, 2001). This is a consistent viewpoint, as within more recent research, Kovalenko and Mortelmans (2016) suggest that although Employability has evolved due to stakeholder involvement and economic change, being able to clearly define Employability is still contested. An example of this is to look at the contrasting views of Employability from Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003) who focus on the ability to gain and maintain employment, compared to the view of HM Treasury (1997) who focus on the need for individuals to develop skills and become adaptable. From only two examples, there is a clear discourse of definition. This point is highlighted further through the research conducted by Quaid and Lindsay (2005) who state that the differences in perspectives appear to revolve around whether the focus is on the individual themselves or

driven by the job market. It could be suggested that industry drives how Employability is defined and this is evident throughout the evolution of Employability which will be discussed further in Chapter 2. However, industry is not the only stakeholder in Employability, which has highlighted the need for understanding the different conceptualisations. There is a significant pull within Employability literature that highlights the need for understanding around individual involvement and responsibility, and in almost all definitions available, there is an individual focus. One of the most utilised definitions of Employability across the differing stakeholders is that of Yorke (2006, p. 8) who states that Employability is:

"a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy".

The definitions of Employability provided within this section are only a snapshot of the definitions widely available within literature but highlight Employability as a contested concept. Within literature, some define the concept of Employability with the focus on a particular stakeholder, whereas others tend to capture a relational nature of the concept. An extensive critique of Employability conceptualisations will be discussed within Chapter 3.

1.4 THE SPORT INDUSTRY

Sport is a central focus of this thesis; therefore, it is important to explore the nature of the Sports industry in order to understand how Employability operates and manifests within it. The sport industry is hugely diverse ranging from grassroots sport to elite level sport, with many different roles, from sport journalists to sport physiotherapists (Tsitskari, Goudas, Tsalouchou and Michalopoulou, 2017). Depending on geographical location, some sports will be more dominant than others. An example of this is in Europe, where Football is deemed the most prominent sport across the continent (King, 2016). When a sport becomes more popular than others, it also has a positive impact on job prospects within that sector, due to the increased demand in popularity and therefore a creation of job opportunities (Tsitskari *et al.* 2017). The research by Tsitskari *et al.* (2017) talks specifically about the sport of Football,

but this is an example of how sport popularity can enhance job prospects. This is also evidenced by Sport England (2021) who state that an increase in sport participation will have a positive impact on the UK job market. Due to the different roles within sport generally, this has also led to a requirement of education that can be fulfilled by specific CPD providers or Higher Education Institutions (Miragaia and Soares, 2017). The needs of different roles within sport require different approaches to teaching and learning to develop the necessary skillsets to fulfil those roles (Miragaia and Soares, 2017).

1.5 EMPLOYABILITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education has been deemed to play a pivotal role in the development of Employability for students (Jackson, 2015). The aim of a university education is to ensure that those who embark on a university programme are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to transition into the workplace (Hugh-Jones, Sutherland and Cross, 2006). The role of Employability within Higher Education has been shaped by numerous stakeholders throughout time, these include government agendas, employment industries and universities (Forrier and Sels, 2003). In alignment to stakeholder involvement, the Quality Assurance Agency of Higher Education (QAA) have assessed who the key stakeholders are within Employability. According to QAA (2014) there are three key stakeholders: Higher Education Providers (HEIs), Employers (Industry) and Students (Individual). For students to be identified as a key stakeholder within Employability by QAA (2014) highlights the importance of the need for an equal voice alongside Higher Education Providers and Employers. Utilising the Key Stakeholders mentioned within this model, a contextualised approach of Employability will be discussed within Chapter 2.

1.6 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

To ascertain a student voice in relation to Employability, it is important to understand and assess how students engage with the concept. Understanding student perceptions of Employability, can be utilised to assess the impact of this on Employability engagement. This thesis also explores perceptions of Employability from HE staff. The justification for this aligns well with assessing student engagement with Employability as Arco-Tirado, Fernandez-Martin

and Hervas-Torres (2020) state, the views and opinions of those who teach can set the tone for the way in which we view or skew the world. This is quite a general view, but it does emphasise the impact that can be created based upon the personal views of the teacher. The impact of those views on student engagement are evidenced within the research by Geertshuis (2019) who reports that negative views can reduce interaction, whilst positive views can enhance student interaction. This comment aligns with the earlier views of Groccia and Hunter (2012) who researched how personal perceptions can impact positively and negatively with one's engagement for a topic.

1.7 THESIS STRUCTURE

Figure 1 outlines the structure of this thesis and highlights the positioning of each chapter in relation to utilising information from the current body of knowledge and how my research will add to this. Below is a brief explanation of the content that can found within each chapter of this thesis.

Figure 1 – Thesis Structure
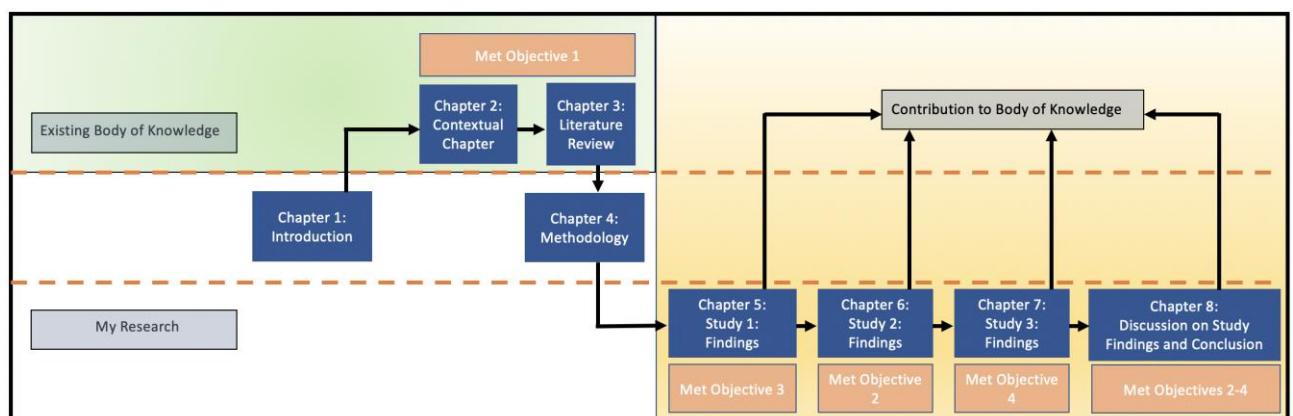
Chapter 1 outlines key areas of discussion to prepare for further elaboration during the remainder of this thesis, to explain and justify the need for this research. A brief introduction for each topic has been provided to outline the complexities of the concept of Employability, and the multiple factors that need to be considered. Introducing the sport industry is relevant

due to the focus of this thesis. The aim of this research is pertaining to students, therefore an understanding of Employability within HE and student engagement is also a point of critical discussion.

Chapter 2 includes a contextual approach to the concept of Employability to demonstrate further understanding in relation to how the concept is used by different stakeholders. The chapter begins by introducing the history of Employability as a concept and shows the evolution over time. To provide some structure to the contextual approach of this chapter, a model from QAA (2014) has been introduced to outline the key stakeholders and the factors that impact upon their interactions with the concept of Employability. Introducing the QAA model demonstrates the point that students are considered a key stakeholder within the concept of Employability, therefore adding further justification for the requirement of this research. Due to the nature of this thesis and the importance of student voice, a narrative has also been provided from a researcher perspective to add context from a student viewpoint in relation to the contents within this chapter.

Chapter 3 offers an extensive literature review to highlight research surrounding the concept of Employability. The Chapter begins by highlighting the numerous ways in which Employability is perceived amongst the various stakeholders. Following this, is the inclusion of a review of empirical evidence to highlight research conducted to capture the voices of these stakeholders to address whether and where there are differences. This information was then compared to how the concept of Employability aligns with literature specific to students studying sport and whether perception of the concept can influence engagement. To understand this further student engagement was introduced within this Chapter to assess a general approach to engagement within HE, before narrowing towards engagement with the concept of Employability. The literature explaining Employability engagement was utilised to see how this differs amongst students studying sport. Throughout this Chapter the use of conceptual and theoretical frameworks used within literature have been discussed to highlight how these informed this research. The purpose of this Chapter is to understand the current understanding of Employability and engagement, how it is perceived, what empirical research has been done, understand if there is a causal effect between Employability and engagement from a literature perspective and identify gaps within the

literature to further justify the need for this research. As within Chapter 2, a student focussed narrative has also been included.

Conclusion of chapters 2 and 3 meet objective 1 of the main aim of this thesis as set out in section 1.2 of this chapter.

Chapter 4 offers an introduction and explanation surrounding the methodology that has been adopted for this thesis, before providing specific detail relating to the upcoming 3 studies. This chapter begins by exploring the different research paradigms to understand the numerous ontological assumptions that would suit both my views on the world as a researcher and justify the ways in which the empirical research for this thesis has been conducted. The next part of this chapter explains Q Methodology as the chosen method for this thesis and provides background information relating to its origins and its purpose within research, to justify why this was chosen for this thesis. The final section of this chapter outlines the specific details related to each of the 3 studies within this thesis.

Chapter 5 introduces the findings from study 1 for this thesis. Within this chapter the research objective is outlined to demonstrate how this addresses the main aim of the research. The focus of this chapter is to capture the perceptions of Employability from university staff members involved with teaching Employability related content across sport related programmes. The purpose of introducing staff into this research is to add context around those who may be influential during the journey a student undertakes whilst at university. This chapter outlines the immediate findings from study 1 and provides some brief insights into understanding these findings. In depth discussion, alongside the other studies within this thesis will be presented in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6 brings the findings from study 2. Study 2 offers an insight into the perceptions of Employability from 1st year undergraduate sport students. This study provides a snapshot overview of Employability perspectives for students who have just embarked on their university journey. Gathering Employability perceptions at the very beginning of university life is important to avoid the risk of influence and ensure that what is captured is an authentic individualised perception of the concept. This chapter offers the findings that have emerged

from this study with some initial insights into understanding the findings. Further discussion and comparison across all 3 studies will be included within Chapter 8.

Chapter 7 outlines the findings from the 3rd and final study for this thesis. The purpose of study 3 incorporates a longitudinal research approach to assess the extent to which Employability perceptions have changed or remained the same and the impact this had on engagement. The participants within this study also feature within study 2 but are now graduates, as this study was conducted 3 years after study 2. This chapter provides the findings from this study ahead of a more in-depth discussion featured within chapter 8 which brings together all 3 studies from this research.

Chapter 8 brings together all 3 studies and provides analysis and discussion when comparing each study and the impact from a holistic perspective. This concluding chapter demonstrates what has been found within this research, why these findings are important and how these findings can add to the body of knowledge. Before offering a conclusion, limitations will be addressed and how these research findings can be applied beyond this thesis for significant impact within the arena of Employability.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYABILITY: A CONTEXTUAL APPROACH

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to develop an understanding of what Employability means to undergraduate sport students and assess how this may impact their engagement with Employability. To understand and ascertain those perceptions, it is important to have a clear contextualised approach regarding Employability to further understand how those different perceptions align with what is published within literature. Therefore, the upcoming chapter will start with an evaluation of the origins of Employability and its evolution over time. This will then be followed by identifying the key stakeholders as suggested by QAA (2014) and evaluating how the concept of Employability is utilised amongst those stakeholders. The key stakeholders according to QAA (2014) are Higher Education Providers, Employers and Students.

2.1 THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYABILITY

Research suggests that the concept of Employability can be traced as far back as at least a century (Gazier, 1998a, 1998b, 2001). It has been reported by Gazier (1998b) that from the beginning of the 20th century, there were seven obvious operational versions of Employability that evolved over a period of approximately 80 years and could be viewed as emerging across three distinct waves. The way these variations evolved were very much derived from the state of specific economies during those times. The research available around the early origins of Employability are based upon the economic status and socio-economic class systems primarily within the UK and the US (Philpott, 1999). Gazier (1998b) has labelled each stage of the seven operational variables as seen in table 1.

Table 1 – Employability Evolution

Employability Description	Wave #	Time Period
1. Dichotomic Employability	1	Early 1900s – Late 1940s
2. Socio-Medical Employability	2	Late 1940s – 1975 (approx)
3. Manpower Policy Employability		
4. Flow Employability		
5. Labour Market Performance Employability	3	1975 (approx) – Early 1990s
6. Initiative Employability		
7. Interactive Employability		

The research by Gazier (1998b) is highly regarded within academic literature in relation to the historical context of Employability. Gazier (1998b) is still frequently cited within more recent academic research. Each of the seven stages as highlighted in table 1, will be explored further within this section to expand on how Employability has evolved and the subsequent impact this has had on the current day concept of Employability.

The term dichotomic derives from the Greek word *'dikhotomia'* meaning cutting in two or having a choice of two opposed or different things (The Oxford English Dictionary, 2008). The meaning of the word dichotomic implies that in the case of Gazier's labelling of **dichotomic Employability**, there appears to be two distinct avenues at play when assessing the very early concepts of Employability in the early 1900s. The two prominent and distinguishing factors within this period are reported as being the classification of members within society across both the UK and the US, as either employable or unemployable. There is no apparent evidence available within research to suggest how these two contrasting terms are measured and therefore allowing individual members of society to be classified as one or the other (Garsten and Jacobsson 2004). The way in which the terms of employable and unemployable were differentiated and therefore divided between members of society was decided by a very simplistic approach (Gazier, 1998b). That simplistic approach meant that if someone was labelled 'employable' they were seen as able and willing to work, whereas if someone was labelled 'unemployable' they were identified as not able to work and in need of relief. Although the term Employability is not yet prevalent during this time, it is clear from the

dichotomic approach that there was an attempt to distinguish and define members of society into specific categories, with employment being the driver of those categorisations.

The move from Dichotomic Employability to the next variation of **Socio-Medical Employability** implies that the foundations and rationale behind moving into a different variation of Employability has shifted. This new variant on Employability was thought to have emerged just prior to the 1950s (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). During this time World War two had ended and this created a change in how people were perceived within society from an employment perspective (McGrath, 2009). With the conclusion of the war, much more prevalence was given to the physical and mental capacities of individuals as a result of post war trauma (McGrath, 2009). These considerations naturally then filtered through to questions relating to individual capabilities within employment. Literature suggests that during this phase the emphasis moved to an assessment of individual capability vs work requirements, which in the present day would be classified as a skills gap analysis (Gazier, 2001). Similar to the previous points made around dichotomic Employability, this variation again is subject to validity and how this was actually measured amongst populations. In modern society there is an abundance of research relating to the benefits that work can bring to not only mental wellbeing but also an improvement in physical capability also, but during the mid 1940s-1950 such research was not available and therefore the non-scientific metrics of pure observation used to ascertain work capability are somewhat questionable (Isaksson, Johansson, Bellaagh and Sjoberg, 2004., James, 1997., Ley, Birkin and Meehan, 2001).

In the 1960s there was yet another apparent change in the way in which employment was perceived. This change in perception was the first obvious glimpse of the incorporation of theoretical concepts that are still in existence and widely used today. That theory is the human capital theory, and although research suggests this was not intentional due to the lack of stated theoretical underpinning, the way in which Employability at that time was being approached suggests that, unintentionally a human capital approach was adopted (McGrath, 2009). The prevalence of individual importance within Employability came to the forefront through the introduction of Geisler's **Manpower** Planning in 1968, in which he refers to the strategic workforce management as knowing the number needed in a workforce, but then also assessing that those numbers of people are adequately capable of fulfilling the role (Geisler, 1968). There are hints within the literature of Smith and Bartholomew (1988) that the idea around Manpower planning was well underway before most of the research

suggests. The work by Geisler (1968) has been labelled as a significant piece of research during a time that Manpower Planning was booming globally (Smith and Bartholomew, 1988). The understanding of manpower planning highlights the use of the term 'Manpower Employability' adopted by Gazier (1998b) as the term utilised helps highlight the change in Employability and the requirements of employment moving towards an individualised approach and individual assessment of capability. It could therefore be argued that the initial industrial approach of 'Manpower Planning' once unpicked is the discovery of a relationship between industry and individual requirements and need. However, there is an argument in relation to whether an individualised approach was at the forefront of any agenda, as Powell and McGrath (2019) states that during this period, youth unemployment was significantly high, and the utilisation of manpower planning was also an easy solution to recruit youth workers and reduce the unemployment deficit. The argument poised by Powell and McGrath (2019) contradicts the original statement related to the purpose of manpower planning by Geisler (1968) who states the importance of making sure capable people are in adequate positions within organisations. The message from the research by Geisler (1968) is maintained upon reviewing the detail of his study, which outlines how he consulted with at least 14 different organisations and assessed the need for manpower planning across the different departments within these organisations. The work by Geisler (1968) indicates that his research considered the needs of the organisation, but also the requirements of the individuals who could fulfil those needs. Although there appears to be a shift towards individual capabilities the research by Powell and McGrath (2019) has slightly thrown this idea off course, as it appears that it was also utilised to increase youth employment rather than assess the skills of those youths, as originally suggested with the manpower approach.

In 1966 Raymond Ledrut, a French sociologist redefined the meaning of Employability to reflect economic changes and requirements during that time (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). During this period, more focus was being given to employee demand, which has a natural impact on the need for supply. Ledrut in 1966 defined Employability as:

"*The objective expectation, or more or less high probability, that a person looking for a job can have of finding one*" (Ledrut, 1966; quoted in Gazier, 1998b, p. 44).

This definition by Ledrut has been categorised as **flow Employability**, as during this time it was much more measurable to assess the flow of people leaving unemployment. Unlike the categories that precede this one, there is no mention of individual capability and a much more significant emphasis placed on the needs of the labour market and economic need. Flow Employability is seen as a demand-based approach to employment, although the extent to which this was individual-based has been disputed (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). However, it is reported by Daguerre (2007) that the flow Employability approach was significantly criticised due to the lack of incentive for job seekers or the need to develop new skills. Salognon (2007) also states that choosing an Employability approach that is solely focused on market demand could hinder the once considered ideal flow Employability approach, due to the need for retraining new staff and continuing with the flow approach of moving personnel across jobs.

The start of the third wave was with the introduction of **labour market performance Employability**, which was introduced in the mid 1970s (Powell and McGrath, 2019). From available research, this period of Employability development appears to be the first with a focus on government policy and agenda as an integral part. This phase of Employability was significantly pertinent for the government as it was reflective of their fight in response to numerous recessions through the early 1970s (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). This became an acknowledgement in the shift towards a new approach to Employability. Prior to the introduction of labour market performance Employability, qualitative studies had been conducted on individuals to assess occupational skills, self-awareness and knowledge of the labour market (Mangum, 1976; Orr 1973). The results of these studies came to fruition alongside the labour market performance Employability approach as the methods used in these studies were used as a measure for an individual's Employability (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). During this time, assessing Employability was measured by number of days in employment, hours worked and rates of pay. This was deemed enough and viable to assess an individual's level of Employability. However, this approach received much criticism for not being accurate enough to assess Employability, which allowed for the idea of reviewing the notion of transferable skills (Hoyt, 1978). The idea of transferable skills allowed for a much more holistic approach to individual Employability, as it allowed them to be assessed and valued based upon skills that can be utilised across sectors and therefore adding personal value to that individual (Betsey, Hollister and Papageorgiou, 1985).

The thread of individual development and importance in relation to Employability continues with the introduction of **initiative Employability** which was introduced in the late 1980s (Gazier, 1998b). Research suggests that acceptance from both individuals and organisations appreciated that successful career development required the development of skills that are transferable and allow for flexibility to move within and across job roles (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). Cairney (2000) explains the introduction of initiative Employability as a 'meta-characteristic' combining skills, knowledge and attitudes. The introduction of initiative Employability brought the onus of Employability back onto the individual, something that was perhaps lost during the preceding phases of Employability development. There are still gaps within the research to demonstrate why these changes occurred in the direction that they did, but it has been suggested that sociological research studies, highlighted the importance of self-development and the productivity that can be gained from this (Machin and Manning, 1999). As there was very little theoretical underpinning within the early stages of development for Employability, it is argued that social studies conducted during this time, were transferred to be of use within Employability development (Kanter, 1995). Mention of human and social capital terminology started to become more prevalent during this period which seems to align with the individual approach to Employability during this time (Cairney, 2000).

Moving onto **interactive Employability**, the theme of individual onus and responsibility is still present and implies that this will be a key feature for clarifying the term Employability going forward. The difference between interactive and initiative Employability is that consideration must now be given for factors that can impact on an individual in relation to Employability (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). Research by Outin (1990) identified four key elements that can impact upon Employability: individual qualities (e.g., motivation); occupational skills; labour market circumstances and government/employer training policies. The use of the term interactive is particularly relevant due to the interactions of additional factors that can impact on an individual's Employability, such as the categorised examples highlighted by Outin (1990). The purpose of highlighting factors of contribution also indicates potential barriers that could hinder the progress of individual Employability. This period allowed for consideration of government policies to be introduced and amended to tackle these barriers and create an opportunity for all (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005). This wave of Employability piqued the interest of policy makers, as they believed during this phase it was

easier to identify and profile potentially disadvantaged groups. Rudolph (2001) stated that interactive Employability was perceived by many western governments as an opportunity to intervene to prevent long term unemployment and labour market disadvantage. The idea of employer led work programmes and flexible training was introduced in government policy in the early 1990s to facilitate an opportunity for individuals regardless of background and personal circumstances (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005).

Understanding the historical transition of Employability as a concept, is required to assess the influence of external factors on how Employability has been perceived and subsequently changed. Within society today, perception and external influence still plays a significant part in the concept of Employability and its development. As mentioned within the introductory chapter of this thesis (Chapter 1), this is evidenced by the QAA (2014) model demonstrating the key stakeholders who impact upon the concept of Employability.

2.2 QAA MODEL OF KEY EMPLOYABILITY STAKEHOLDERS

In 2014 the QAA introduced a model to reflect who the key stakeholders are in relation to Employability (Figure 2). The model was developed for the UK based upon the need for employer engagement within the concept of Employability. QAA (2014) justified the need for this model by stating that employer engagement is an area of increasing importance to the strategic development of higher education institutions. This model was created after research was conducted to assess interactions between employers and HEIs and evaluated the ways of shared practice.

In the remainder of this chapter, the key stakeholders that have been identified within this model will be used to outline a contextual understanding of Employability.

FIGURE 2 – QAA Stakeholder Model (2014)
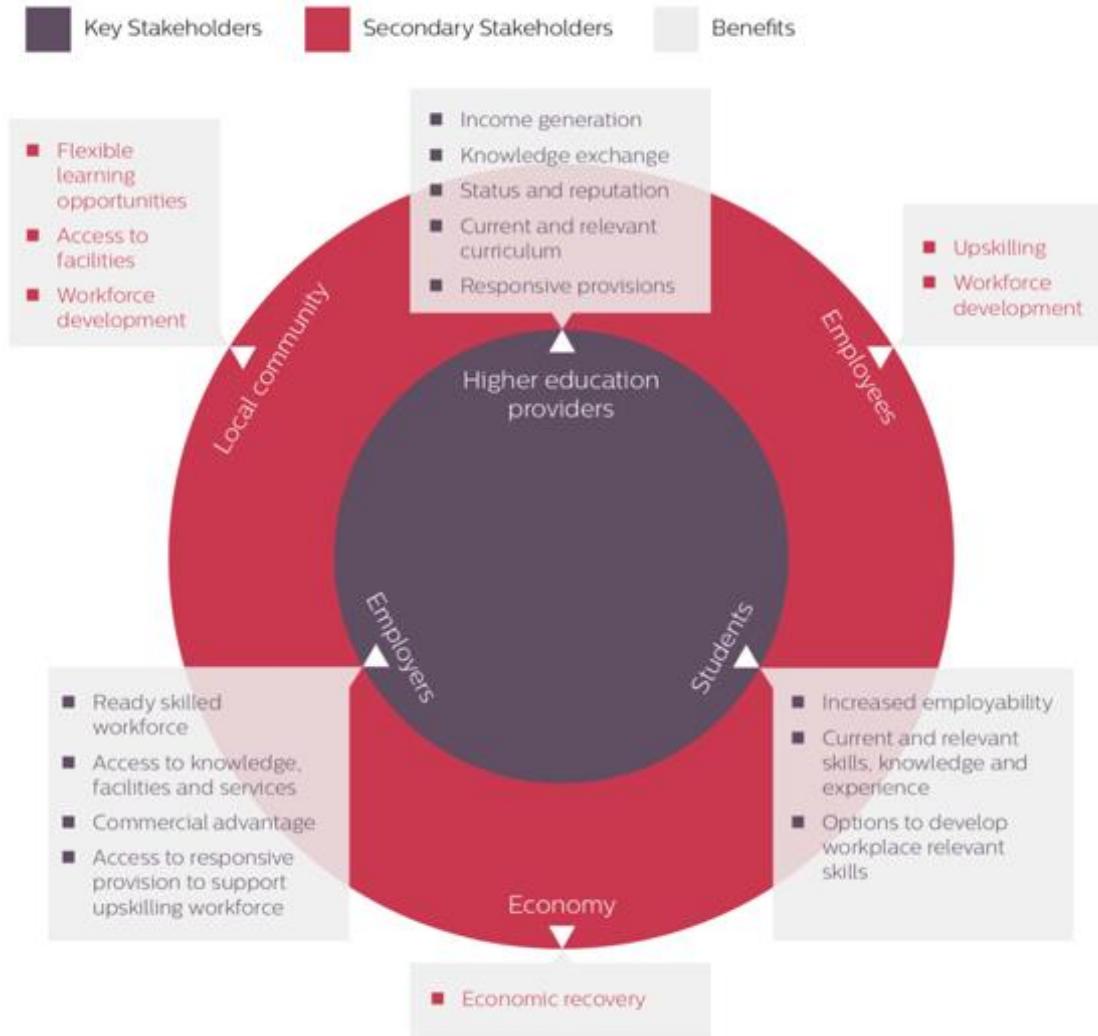
2.3 HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS: EMPLOYABILITY WITHIN UK HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)

The Employability agenda within Higher Education was largely driven by government policy and academic research, but this began to change in 2003 when the government published a White Paper which signalled a change in tuition fee responsibility (Rogers, 2013). The White Paper published in 2003 stated that from 2005 and over the subsequent years, there would be a gradual increase in tuition fees (from £3000 to £9000) across Higher Education providers that would eventually be 100% payable by the student, as opposed to the previous plan which was heavily subsidised by the government (Smith, 2014).   This change allowed the student population to expect, not only more from their university, but for them to have a much louder voice when it comes to their education (Donald, Ashleigh and Baruch 2018). To understand the status of Higher Education and Employability, further exploration is needed to evaluate the role of Higher Education in relation to the concept of Employability

2.3.1 THE POLITICAL AGENDA AND THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Government policy in relation to Employability was largely determined by the needs of the economy and labour market, as evidenced in the Robbins Report (1963) to ensure that workforces were suitably qualified and capable to move into the world of work (Warhurst, Nickson and Witz, 2000). Following on from The Robbins Report, in 1997 the UK government released the Dearing report which outlined plans for Higher Education and included Employability as a significant part of these plans. In his report, Dearing tried to create a vision for the future by promoting widening participation, considering the use of technology to enhance learning, and recommended that all higher education courses need to consider how they can improve student Employability (Birch, 2017). Dearing suggested that to address improvement across the student population in relation to Employability, there needed to be specific direction. Dearing proposed that higher education should have a focus on key skills, which would translate to become key to the future success of graduates whatever they intend to do in later life (Dearing, 1997). In his statement Dearing chose to focus on specific skills for development that he believed would improve Employability, those included, communication

20

skills, numeracy, self-reflection, personal development planning and problem solving to name just a few (Dearing, 1997). Progressive changes within Higher Education and how this can be impactful on individuals, society and the economy were recognised in the Dearing report, as he mentioned the changes in teaching and learning and how employers had started to work with Higher Education to create sector specific programmes (Dearing, 1997). Stakeholder contribution was mentioned as a specific positive approach to Employability development and how this can help to shape how Higher Education can be become significant in the development of Employability. However, as mentioned in the opening paragraph of this section, in 2003 the Labour government published a White Paper which focused upon the need for tuition fee structures to change (Rogers, 2013). The impact of this White Paper had a direct consequence on the role of higher education and signified the beginning of how higher education would be perceived going forward. The Labour government proposed that all UK Universities would be able to charge £3000 per year as an upper limit, and that this cost would be covered by the student (Rogers, 2013). Rogers (2013) states that in 2005 almost every university in the UK was charging the maximum £3000 per year for tuition fees. With the fee increase there was now an expectation on universities to offer more to their students, not only to offer good value for money but to also allow universities to be competitive across the Higher Education sector (Donald, Ashleigh and Baruch 2018). Shortly after the tuition fee increase in 2005, David Cameron leader of the Conservative Party, stated that university tuition fees need to come from somewhere which sparked a hostile confrontation with the National Union of Students (The NUS) (National Union of Students, 2010). The NUS soon waivered the fight when in 2010 Lord Browne recommended that all university students should be paying at least £21,000 for a university education. The recommendation from Lord Browne triggered the government to alter their obligatory fee contributions and instead allow universities to charge anything up to £7000 per academic year to their students. Between 2010 – 2012 universities across the UK started to increase tuition fees up to £7000 per academic year. The rise of university tuition fees did not stop in 2012, as currently the average yearly fee at university is £9250 across undergraduate degree programmes (Times Higher Education, 2022).

2.3.2 TUITION FEE INCREASE AND THE IMPACT UPON HIGHER EDUCATION

As with any significant change, this triggered a chain reaction of events and creates impact on additional areas (Hinchliffe and Jolly, 2011). The increase of tuition fees allowed universities to assess their own contribution and product (courses) to determine the type of experience and qualities students were receiving (Birch, 2017). Prior to the introduction of tuition fees and subsequently the increases thereafter, a university education was seen as 'enough', and as part of a university education, students would be equipped with relevant knowledge to move forward into a chosen career (Kovalenko and Mortelmans, 2016). Kovalenko and Mortelmans (2016) also state that during this time, Employability was seen as an indirect achievement, as it was all rolled into the university education experience. This is no longer the case and the rise in tuition fees has allowed Employability to move into a more prominent role within university policies (Nadge, 2005). As with anything, if there is a price increase, it is natural to expect more for your money and this is replicable across Higher Education due to tuition fee increases. Yorke (2006) states that it is a mistake to assume that experience alone, whether within higher education or not, is sufficient to be labelled as enhanced Employability. Research such as that by Yorke (2006) highlights that for Employability to be deemed efficient more than a university experience is required, which falls into alignment with the approach required for Employability because of increasing tuition fees. Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of career services and career resources across UK Universities. Trought (2012) has proposed that the rise in career/Employability services within Higher Education signifies not only the importance of career driven support for students but also the expectation of what a university should provide for students. This is backed up by QS' International Student Survey (2021) who reported that when students are choosing their university education, work placements and internships are a key component of their selection criteria. The International Student Survey (2021) also reported that 32% of students seek institutions with a good careers service and links to industry, whilst a further 38% made university decisions based upon graduate employment rate.

Additional services within Higher Education are only one way in which Employability has been driven forward because of the tuition fee increase. Perhaps seen as a more important change is the need and utilisation of Employability development within curricula

(EACEA, 2015). This approach to Employability was indirectly stated by Yorke (2006) who mentions that Employability within curricula is important, but providing Employability development opportunities is simply not enough, as the true identifier of Employability is derived from the way in which a student learns from their experiences and the impact of those lessons learnt going forwards. Traditional ways of teaching at universities are almost non-existent across most UK Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to keep up with the ever-changing needs of employers, communities and students (QS, 2020). QS (2020) state that the days of standing at the front of a room and lecturing are gone, students expect a much more flexible and collaborative learning experience. Understanding how Employability related content and its subsequent development is embedded into the curriculum is important, and this will be discussed within the next section of this chapter.

2.3.3 HIGHER EDUCATION MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS: TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (TEF) AND DESTINATION OF LEAVERS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION (DLHE)

In 2016 the UK government introduced The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to recognise and reward excellent teaching and learning within Higher Education (Murphy, Scott-Clayton and Wyness, 2017). For a university to be granted TEF status, they must evidence how they have met specific criteria' set out in the TEF guidelines (UCAS, 2020). In addition to being reflective of teaching and learning status, there is also another purpose for gaining TEF status from the university perspective. According to UCAS (2020), publicly funded Universities and Colleges who are granted a TEF award can charge up to the highest maximum amount as set by the government for Higher Education courses. Not only does this incentivise universities to apply for TEF status, but it also encourages them to assess their own practice against TEF criteria to achieve the desired status level of the university. There are three main aspects of quality that are assessed when considering TEF status (Department for Education, 2018):

- Teaching Quality
- Learning Environment
- Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

In relation to the relevance of this thesis, one of those criteria' aligns directly to Employability practice; Student Outcomes and Learning Gain. Within this criteria universities are assessed based upon Employability opportunities whilst studying and graduate employment through The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey (HESA, 2020). The use of DLHE to measure the success of student Employability is one that can be utilised when applying for TEF status, but there has also been heavy criticism regarding the reliability and validity of the DLHE measures (Bannon, McColgan, MacNeil and French, 2016). One criticism of the DLHE survey is the 60% threshold that has been placed on the metric to release the data captured, this means that providing there is a 60% uptake across a university, then this data is deemed as an accurate representative picture in which to portray that university (Bannon *et al.* 2016). There have also been questions raised regarding the robustness of the criteria to which the data is generated, e.g., a student will be asked if they are working within a relevant sector to their degree programme, rather than their specific job role (UUK, 2016). The lack of clarity regarding the validity of the data collected is therefore open to interpretation and could be seen to skew the data.

2.4 EMPLOYERS: AN EMPLOYABILITY APPROACH

Within this section the concept of Employability will be explored from the perspective of different sectors to examine if there are holistic similarities, regardless of sector or significant disparities. According to Prospects (2022) there are approximately twenty-four different employment sector categories across the UK. At the time of writing this thesis the top four sectors in relation to recruitment figures were business, engineering, healthcare and retail (Prospects, 2022). Each sector will be examined to assess their perspective on Employability. Following this, for the purpose of this thesis, a subsequent section will follow and be specifically focussed towards the sport sector to align with the research conducted for this thesis.

2.4.1 EMPLOYABILITY WITHIN THE BUSINESS SECTOR

Within the business sector Employability has been described as requiring more than just acquiring information (Lumley and Wilkinson, 2014). Employability success within the business market encourages anyone within this sector to present 'Employability assets' effectively to employers. Lumley and Wilkinson (2014) state that Employability assets are conveyed as knowledge, skills and mindset. Of the 3 dominant traits categorised as Employability assets 'mindset' was perceived as the most desirable trait within an employee (Lumley and Wilkinson, 2014). Mindset has been identified as a prominent trait due to the resilience and mental toughness required within the world of business. It has been reported that knowledge and skills can be assessed from an academic standpoint, meaning that many people can share these traits, however mindset is something that can separate potential employees and highlight those likely candidates who will succeed and thrive in the world of business (Goleman, 2012., Goode, 2003 and Greaves, Mortimer and Wilkinson, 2004). This is further justified through the work of The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2016) who have found that within the world of business the cognitive processing of information and the problem-solving abilities of individuals is a key function of business survival. Although the work by The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2016) highlights the need for mental resilience through a strong minded individual, they also mention the need to align this with the additional assets mentioned by Lumley and Wilkinson (2014) of knowledge and skills. In the sector of business there has also been research around entrepreneurship and how this can lend itself to needing the same traits of those generally across the business sector. Research by Boyles (2012) has stated that due to the emphasis on the need for high levels of competencies within business, this may have a detrimental impact on the idea that entrepreneurship is only for certain highly gifted individuals. The research by Boyles (2012) suggests that by stating specific competencies of cognitive excellence, this can deter future entrepreneurs without the realisation that most entrepreneurs develop the required cognitive skills whilst learning their trade, and therefore are not the finished article at the start of their business venture. The research around Employability within the business industry implies that there is a need for demonstratable individual competencies and traits with the idea that industry specific Employability assets are developed through experience in the hope of achieving success.

2.4.2 EMPLOYABILITY WITHIN THE ENGINEERING SECTOR

Due to the nature of the chosen sector (engineering) the research around Employability has been collated predominantly from India where engineering is a growing sector within the economy producing over 1.5 million engineering graduates each year (Sinha, Ghosh and Mishra, 2020). Research within this domain has deviated away from defining what Employability means to this sector but there are some interesting findings when exploring how employers view engineering graduates. Two studies conducted by Blom and Saeki, (2011); Jeswani (2016) highlight that, employers feel there is a significant skills gap between the competencies of the engineering graduates and employer expectations. Employers find knowledge of subjects in curriculum and performance in academia (McMurray, Dutton, McQuaid and Richard, 2016), along with subject-specific skills (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin and Zehner, 2013; Saeed, 2015), to be of lesser significance than personal attributes and soft skills, because what graduate employees know is of greater concern to employers than what these employees do (Jackson, 2010). From the research available it appears to demonstrate a desirable need for soft skills as a crucial component of Employability within engineering, but there also appears to be a significant concern with how these engineers are educated prior to graduating. Sinha, Ghosh and Mishra (2020) have made reference to the human capital theory (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964) as this proposes how education can enhance an individual's productivity which has a direct impact on job performance and therefore highlighting how education can generate marketable skills and abilities to be successful in employment. An earlier study conducted by Gokuladas (2010) has emphasised the need for graduates within engineering to be innovative and have the ability to demonstrate and use initiative. This has been reported as a crucial requirement for the engineering sector due to the nature of quick turn over in production and the ability to be able to solve problems quickly to continue with the fast pace of the engineering world. From this study it was reported that although graduates demonstrated the knowledge to be able to fulfil employment within engineering, concerns were raised regarding the execution of this knowledge (Gokuladas, 2010). The studies mentioned above seem to have similar concerns in relation to the execution and delivery of the skills and knowledge, which seems to indicate that there is a possible gap within the soft skill development of these graduates.

2.4.3 EMPLOYABILITY WITHIN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR

The literature surrounding Employability within a healthcare setting is mainly targeted to those who are pre-registered healthcare professionals and are therefore still studying to be qualified within the profession. Work by Kubler and Forbes (2005a, 2005b, 2005c) specifically pinpointed areas that are considered to form an Employability profile for healthcare workers and is used as a template for assessing Employability across the sector. The main competencies outlined by Kubler and Forbes (2005a, 2005b, 2005c) are:

- Cognitive skills
- Generic competencies
- Personal capabilities
- Technical ability
- Business/organisational awareness
- Practical/professional elements

It has been argued by Taylor (2014) that the competencies generated by the research of Kubler and Forbes (2005a, 2005b, 2005c) is far too vague and leaves the door open for further confusion due to the lack of clarity in how to break down these competencies. The vagueness of the competencies set out by Kubler and Forbes (2005a, 2005b, 2005c) encouraged Taylor (2014) to conduct a study focussed on the views of the training healthcare students and potential employers. During this study the participants were given common themes relating to Employability and asked to rate how important they believed these themes to be. The three emerging themes rated the highest were, enthusiasm for the job, making a good impression and passion for the profession (Taylor, 2014). These findings led Taylor to believe that a more holistic approach to Employability within the healthcare profession was required, as simply listing six vague competencies could allude to what is important within the profession. It can be argued that the findings of Taylor (2014) could be categorised into some of the competencies outlined by Kubler and Forbes (2005a, 2005b, 2005c), but lack of clarity could lead to misinterpretation of the meaning of those competencies. As stated by Hinchliffe and Jolly (2011) a healthcare worker must have clear interpersonal skills as the nature of work

undertaken can be delicate and a good bedside manner is an essential requirement for anyone pursuing a career within this sector. As within the previous sectors discussed, there appears to be a theme emerging around the need for skill and knowledge execution to be a progressive next step within education after skill and knowledge acquisition.

2.4.4 EMPLOYABILITY WITHIN THE RETAIL SECTOR

Nickson, Warhurst, Commander, Hurrell and Cullen (2012) highlight that Employability is a concern of the government and because of this, Higher Education was pushed to the forefront in order to increase the numbers of qualified people in a hope to boost employment rates, and therefore the economy. Nickson *et al.* (2012) adds to this by stating that simply qualifying someone does not make them employable, particularly in a sector like retail. The retail industry is a customer facing service that requires the need for soft skills, therefore being qualified is only half of the solution (Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Lafer, 2004). Soft skills are defined by Moss and Tilly (1996: 253) as:

> *"Skills, abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude and behaviour rather than to formal or technical knowledge".*

The requirements of workers within the retail sector are considered different to other sectors, one study even suggests understanding emotion as being a requirement of the industry to empathise with customers (Warhurst, Nickson and Witz, 2000). This reference by Warhurst, Nickson and Witz (2000) shows very similar requirements to those expected within the healthcare industry as mentioned previously. This highlights that although different industries have different Employability expectations, there are apparent skills that can overlap and therefore be deemed as transferrable skills. Nickson *et al.* (2012) argues that the debate around soft skill development is not necessarily an academic one, but there is still something to be addressed here. Gatta, Boushey and Appelbaum (2009:985) makes the point that perhaps this is an academic debate, who states:

"Sociologists need to develop a research agenda that recognises skills in service work, both at the level of worksites and within national skills certification systems; that understands how service work can be organised, so skills are rewarded and quality of jobs is improved; and that develops training and education protocols to ensure that current and future workforces possess the necessary skills".

There is an apparent need for further discussion around qualification vs soft skill development within this sector as the research suggests that qualifications feature low in employers' perceptions of Employability and that soft skills matter more (Nickson *et al.* 2012). The research available around Employability within this sector implies that there is a potential misalignment of strategy between the government policies of qualifications being most important and employer needs and expectations when it comes to employees and the need for important soft skills.

2.4.5 EMPLOYERS: AN EMPLOYABILITY APPROACH - SUMMARY

Throughout the sectors discussed there appears to be a common thread running through each sector, which is education. Across all four sectors, education seems integral to the way in which Employability is perceived, whether that be the acquisition of knowledge or the apparent short comings of soft skill development. In order to visualise the perception of Employability from these sectors a table has been produced (table 2) to evaluate how Employability is labelled across sectors, what these labels mean and the subsequent areas of concern raised within each sector. For the purposes of this thesis, the next section will look more specifically towards the sports industry to understand the overall structure, how the industry has developed and how the growth of the industry reflects on industry requirements in relation to Employability.

Table 2 - Sector Specific Employability Perceptions

Sector	Employability Description based on industry specific literature	Meaning	Points of Concern
Business	Employability Assets	Knowledge, Skills and Mindset	Competency levels could be perceived out of reach and deter individuals from the sector of business
Engineering	Graduate Competencies	Soft Skills and Subject Knowledge	Evident gap within soft skill development
Healthcare	Employability Profile	Vague Competencies vs Interpersonal	Competencies are vague and broad. Sector requires more emphasis on soft skills
Retail	Employability	Government Agenda = Qualifications Sector Requirements = Soft Skill Development	The government agenda on Employability is not fit for purpose for the needs of a sector such as retail

2.4.6 THE SPORTS INDUSTRY

The sport industry is vast and diverse and offers many opportunities for potential career avenues. Further exploration is needed to understand how employers have been identified as a key stakeholder within the concept of Employability. When researching the sport sector, there are additional divisions that are often included within the same bracket, such as leisure and tourism. Each of these bring their own opportunities and Employability requirements, and although there will be some overlap, for the purposes of this thesis, the sports sector in isolation will be the main point of focus.

According to Pedersen and Thibault (2019) who refer to the Contemporary Sport Management Sport Industry Sectors Model (CSMSISM) there are three distinct sectors when outlining the sport industry. The sport industry is divided into Public Sector, Non-profit Sector and Commercial Sector. Within this section each sector will be explained to identify the differences between each one.

The public sector refers to government or public funded support to facilitate sport and provide opportunities in both an employment perspective but also to increase participation for those interested in taking part in physical activity (Pedersen and Thibault, 2019). Public sector sport involves financial contributions from the government to be invested into National Governing Bodies (NGB) and local authorities to encourage involvement within sport across communities. Individuals working within public sector sport have been identified as having an interest in sport or leisure without the expectation of high salaries (Rotolo and Wilson, 2006). Due to the nature of funding for the public sector, employees should not expect to be receiving substantial salaries in a 'not for profit' sector. A typical employee within this sector is someone who enjoys sport and leisure and wants to earn a modest living within the sport industry (Dur and Zoutenbier, 2014; Rotolo and Wilson, 2006). Research has demonstrated that individuals who are monetary orientated demonstrate different levels of personality traits in comparison to those who seek fulfilment and enjoyment (Halvari, Forest and Deci, 2015; Houston, 2006; Lindner, 1998; Olafsen). When this is compared to the typical traits required by the public sector in sport, there are clear distinctions for those individuals who perhaps would be better suited towards the private sector. According to research by Daley, (1992); Kim, Perrewe, Kim and Hyung Kim, (2017) and Ko and Pastore, (2005) the traits of those most suitably aligned to public sector sport include being proactive, willing to help others, empathetic, passionate, respectful and considerate. It could be argued that these traits could be transferable across private and voluntary sectors also, but there are differences, which will be discussed later in this section. The level of which these traits are required could differ depending on the job role within public sector sport. Public sector sport offers a versatile array of job opportunities with varying levels of responsibility (Kim *et al.* 2017). Roles include but are not limited to, general management, administration, sport coaches, team leaders, welfare/safeguarding and co-ordinator roles (Kim *et al.* 2017). Each of these roles will require different levels of responsibility and individual traits for the individual employees.

The non-profit sector, also known as the voluntary sector is classified as the largest of the three according to Vandermeerschen, Maganck, Seghers, Vos and Scheerder (2017). Often seen as the 'grassroots' of British sport, this sector is funded through the efforts of volunteers who fundraise to ensure clubs and societies can remain active within communities. Clubs and societies within this sector often combine with small, medium and large

organisations in a bid to raise the awareness of community and grassroots sport. A description of those who work in the voluntary sector of sport have been labelled as those who are passionate about sport and are prepared to be involved for the greater good (Rotolo and Wilson, 2006). The voluntary sector is unlike the private and public sectors of sport due to the requirement of individual involvement deriving from the individual themselves. The requirements of skills and traits are therefore different as Rotolo and Wilson (2006) states, for someone to become a volunteer already highlights the attitude of that person. Rotolo and Wilson (2006) further state that becoming a volunteer demonstrates a passion for sport in exchange for someone's time, and this alone is an admirable trait that any industry or sector would be lucky to acquire. Voluntary roles are vast and can vary from groundkeeper to club secretary. Due to the nature of this sector being driven by volunteers, there is already a foundation of a proactive and willing workforce. Research suggests that unlike other sectors, the voluntary sector is an environment of leniency regarding roles and responsibilities (Brown, Hoye and Nicholson, 2012; Kim *et al*. 2017). Within this sector, the expectations of volunteers are flexible due to no expectation of remuneration.

The private sector within the sport industry is designed to promote sport and leisure opportunities to the local population with the aim of making profit. Some examples of the private sector include sport retail (JD Sports, Sports Direct), privately run gyms (David Lloyd, DW Fitness) and Gambling Events (Horse Racing, Football). Within the private sector, sport is seen as the product that must be sold to consumers to increase profit margins (Laine and Vehmas, 2017a). Much like the traits identified within the public sector, these are still requirements within the private sector, but as there is more to be gained from a business perspective, much more is required of the workforce. As a comparison, an administrative position within the public sector, may be simply inputting customer information into a database, this may also apply to the administrator in the private sector but with the addition of a sales driven approach within this role. Profit increases occur when a business receives more custom, to increase custom, there is the requirement of a sales pitch (Laine and Vehmas, 2017b). Within the private sector of sport, most roles are expected to always be looking for the opportunity to generate business from either current customers or new sales leads (Georgiou and Fotiou, 2019; Wagner, Hansen, Kristensen and Josty, 2019). Needing employees who are equipped to generate income aligns with skills and traits of ideal personnel as outlined within the research by Georgiou and Fotiou (2019). Within the research

by Georgiou and Fotiou (2019) it is stated that private sector employees within the sport industry are not only expected to have a passion for sport but can easily convert this into a legitimate sales tactic for generating revenue. The profiteering approach of the private sector within sport also links to the points made within section 2.4.1 were Lumley and Wilkinson (2014) stated that mindset was of dominance in relation to Employability within the business sector. Adopting the correct mindset can also have an impact on how an individual also acquires and executes other skillsets, such as interpersonal skills. There is a specific focus within the research of Sauer, Spradley and Cromartie (2017) that mentions the need for interpersonal skills and building relationships with people as a key component to success within the private sector. Building rapport is not only useful for converting business leads into customers, but for the individual, it can also provide a boost in confidence, self-esteem and reassurances of being successful (Sauer, Spradley and Cromartie, 2017). It could be argued that these traits are useful across all sectors within the sport industry, but dependent on the focus of the sector, will determine the prioritisation of certain skillsets.

It is evident that each sector differs in terms of funding but also purpose. Whereas the private sector is predominantly driven by making profit, the others are more focussed towards increasing participation, developing talent of the future and also utilising sport as a vehicle to achieve bigger agendas within society. Research suggests that across each sector of the sports industry there are shared commonalities when considering the workforce. There are different reasons why individuals may choose to work within a distinct sport sector, but the individual traits required are very similar. As highlighted within the previous sections, individual choice can be determined by what is deemed important within their professional lives. Some individuals may want to be involved in the sport industry for enjoyment, whereas others may seek opportunities within the sport industry as a long-term career option.

In relation to how these sectors within the sport industry can directly impact on job prospects for example, it is important to assess the growth of each sector. In a survey conducted by Sport England (2021) it was reported that participation levels are at the highest they have ever been, with an increase of over 1 million more people being active within sport compared to the previous year. This increase in participation bolstered the public sector and non-profit sector as people began to invest time in sport and leisure activities (Sport England, 2021). This overall increase across sport was also reflective across the private sector. The private sector within the sport industry has grown significantly over the past 10 years. For

example, it has been reported that the impact of the London 2012 Olympic games played a significant role in the growth of the fitness industry. Between the years of 2012 and 2019 there was growth of approximately 4x the number of fitness facilities within the UK. The level of growth seen between 2012-2019 may have occurred naturally but some report that London 2012 did influence this. The current participation rate for adults in the UK with active gym memberships is 17%, which equates to approximately 9.7 million members (The Sports Industry Research Group, 2022).

The Sport Industry Research Group (SIRG, 2018) predicted that due to an increase in sport participation, within the year of 2020 an additional £1.8bn would contribute to the economy via sport. There is no evidence available to suggest whether this prediction was accurate. As a sector, sport is a significant contributor to economies throughout Europe. This is evidenced in the research by the European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) (2020) who shared that the percentage of individuals employed within the sport industry showed a consistent pattern of growth between 2014-2019 in all parts of Europe except for Estonia, Slovakia, Lithuania and Poland. In the UK there was consistency at 1.3% in both 2014 and 2019. The data shared by EU-LFS (2020) highlighted that there was an increase in the individual data for the UK, but not significant enough to increase the percentage across the five-year comparison. The information provided by EU-LFS (2020) highlights that in 2020 the state of the sport industry was either, a; growing or b; remaining stable in most parts of Europe. Trendafilova and McCullough (2018) states when a sector is growing or maintaining this creates indirect opportunities for other industries to benefit. The statement by Trendafilova and McCullough (2018) could be applicable to how growth within the sport sector can have an impact on supply and demand.

Research has shown that historically sport was deemed as a past time, and therefore those involved did so for enjoyment or for other benefits such as health or social interaction (Kwauk, 2014). For those individuals who stayed involved within sport or leisure, their experiences became invaluable and much sought after. This was evident throughout many roles within the sport industry and across each of the 3 sectors. Experience is deemed as a reliable indicator in terms of recruitment of employees and is still desirable. There are some negative criticisms of experience, as without appropriate commentary, it could be assumed that all experiences are fulfilling and worthwhile, when this may not be the case (Cushion, Armour and Jones, 2003). Experience is crucial within the sports industry, but the levels of

different experiences must be accounted for. Cushion, Armour and Jones (2003) suggests that individuals may undertake work related experiences within a sports industry setting, but they could have 2 completely different experiences. On paper they could be the same, but in practice, they may be different.

Sport is a rapidly expanding industry and growth is apparent across all 3 sectors mentioned earlier within this section. Different opportunities are presented when an industry is expanding, this is no different with the sport industry. With growth and development comes varied roles, and therefore a variety of required skillsets. Osmani, Hindi and Weerakkody (2021) and Warhurst, Tholen and Commander (2013) suggests that as the sport industry developed so did the need for skilled employees and volunteers. This area of development highlighted a gap for skill development and the need for training and support within the sport industry. As evidenced earlier, different roles require different skillsets, but with such a gap now being exposed, this allowed education and training providers to offer solutions. Education providers work alongside industry to determine the skillsets required to acquire roles within sport. The level of education on offer varies from CPD training courses to university programmes. The implementation of formal training and development opportunities for the sport industry is dominating minimum requirements for those seeking employment within the industry. Relevant experience is still valid, but this is now expected alongside formal education (Aicher and Newland, 2020). Aicher and Newland (2020) reported that historically within sport former players would use experience to acquire roles in management, but as sport has evolved, experience alone is no longer enough. The combination of experience and qualification is also reflective within job market advertisements. The requirements needed according to the job market allow education providers to become competitive, as formal education has become a prerequisite in most roles within the sport industry.

To align the requirements of industry, alongside Higher Education and individual development, there is often input required from professional development bodies. Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) is the professional body for the UK's sport and physical activity industry. The purpose of CIMSPA is to ensure that there is a set standard for the industry in relation to quality assurance, driving workforce policy within the industry and shaping the industry to become recognised and respected to offer an attractive industry that everyone wants to be part of (CIMSPA, 2021). The

involvement of CIMSPA in the development of the sport industry is an assurance of the creation of a diverse and equality focussed sector whilst working alongside relevant stakeholders to enable success. CIMSPA interact with employers, higher education providers, NGBs, Training Providers, Practitioners and Policy Makers, to ensure a holistic approach is captured when setting standards for what is important for the sport and physical activity industry. To demonstrate best practice and highlight the importance of setting professional standards, CIMSPA offer accreditation to those organisations who demonstrate they are meeting regulatory benchmarks set out by CIMSPA (CIMSPA, 2021).

When considering the different vocations classified within the sports industry it is clear to see why the growth of this industry has resulted in a direct increase in sport education and subsequently sport employment. Within the industry of sport there are still degrees of variation, just like any other, from high earning professionals to low paid casually contracted employees (Laine and Vehmas, 2017a). Gratton and Taylor (2000) expressed that the sport industry is an important and growing part of the British Economy. This was evidenced in the research carried out by SIRG in 2018 who found that in the year 2015/16 £8.75bn of social value was generated by sport and physical activity in London alone.

2.4.7 SPORT AND EMPLOYABILITY

As mentioned in the previous section, consideration surrounding the sport industry and Employability is required to address the needs of the current sport industry market. Earlier in this chapter, different sectors of industry were considered in relation to how they perceive and integrate the need for Employability. This section will focus specifically on the way in which Employability is viewed within the sports sector.

Research by Gedye and Beaumont (2018) highlight that within the domain of the sports market, there is a requirement to be a certain type of person, and this is often translated through the stereotypical perception of an elitist mentality associated through sport. Gedye and Beaumont (2018) state that within the sports sector a successful candidate who is employed within an elite sport setting in any discipline would be expected to have a high standard of interpersonal skills and character to excel in the elite environment. This view is further shared within the research of Allen, Greenlees and Jones (2013) who explains that sport in nature is competitive, and this should be part of the nature of individuals who work

within sport, at both amateur and professional level. In contrast to the views shared earlier in this chapter when exploring other industry sectors, terms such as elitist or competitive were not mentioned, but there could be an argument for such traits to be present within those other sectors too. The mention of interpersonal skills within the research by Gedye and Beaumont (2018) could relate to the points made within the other sectors discussed earlier regarding the need for a development of soft skills. Allen, Greenless and Jones (2013) states that the need for applicable personality traits and characteristics for anyone working within the sports sector is so important due to the customer facing nature of the business, and interaction required. Again, this research by Allen, Greenlees and Jones (2013) when speaking of customer facing, could easily be applicable to other industry sectors besides sport, particularly healthcare and retail. There is overlap in relation to how Employability is perceived and required within the sports sector alongside the different industries mentioned previously within this chapter. The overlapping information however, is probably a little more subtle due to the different ways in which industry sectors categorise employer needs and requirements.

2.5 STUDENTS AS A KEY STAKEHOLDER

As mentioned within chapter 1 of this thesis, at the beginning of this PhD journey in 2013, very little was published in relation to Employability and student voice, including those studying sport. This is somewhat surprising considering the QAA Key Stakeholder Model (2014) specifically outlines 'students' as a key stakeholder. This indicates that understanding the importance of undergraduate student views was apparent but the lack of literature around hearing the student voice was missing. However, readily available research around graduate Employability is accessible, but the significant disadvantage was that the views of graduates are of course post academia. For the purpose of offering some context to students in relation to Employability, research from a reflective graduate perspective will be drawn upon.

A study by Dinning (2017) included graduate perspectives of Employability from those who studied sport degrees. Dinning reported that graduates seemed to be aware of the need to develop work ready skills, but often lacked enthusiasm when focussing on entrepreneurial

development.   It was reported that graduates associate entrepreneurship with self-employment, and therefore was only of interest to those who wanted to pursue this avenue. The research also highlighted the need for clarity when assessing skills amongst graduates, as when asked about 'leadership' a shared comment was referring to leadership not being important as it is only needed by people who are managers. The research highlighted that although further work is needed to understand different perspectives, there is also a need to ensure there is clarity amongst defining skills themselves.   The research by Dinning is focussing mainly on skills and graduate understanding. Other literature with a focus outside the discipline of Sport, seems to have a slightly different focus towards interpersonal skills and qualities, as highlighted in the study by Sarker, Overton, Thompson and Rayner (2016).

A study conducted by Sarker *et al.* (2016) stated that graduates from the disciplines of physics, science and chemistry across numerous UK Universities reported that they valued generic skills and perceived them to hold greater importance and usefulness than subject specific knowledge. In this same study, those same graduates also reported that they felt unprepared for utilising their knowledge and skills in the workplace due to a lack of opportunity to build prior experience. The research by Sarker *et al*. (2016) aligns with thoughts and concerns from those in industry as highlighted within section 2.4, so the lack of student voice whilst undertaking their higher education journey seems to be a significant void in relation to addressing these concerns. There is an apparent awareness from both an employer (section 2.4) and graduate perspective around the utilisation of Employability, but the lack of literature around capturing student understanding of Employability at undergraduate level is only highlighting the problem of Employability gaps too late. The awareness of needs is highlighted by Jones (2014) who states that employer needs are well documented, but universities are choosing to focus on promoting discipline-specific content knowledge at the expense of generic skills required in the workplace. There is further evidence of this gap through the research of Jorre De St Jorre and Oliver (2018) who state, whilst institution-wide initiatives bring strategic change, there is a possibility that the most important intended beneficiaries – the students – may be absent or silent in the process.

This again highlights that there is a gap and therefore potential need to introduce mechanisms to record the input of all stakeholders as outlined in the QAA Key Stakeholder Model (2014).

2.6 CONCLUSION

Upon reviewing the concept of Employability from a contextual viewpoint of the three key stakeholders according to QAA (2014), there appears to be evidence of significant efforts being made from an employer and Higher Education perspective but there is still an imbalance when considering the student voice.

From a Higher Education context, there are multiple factors that impact upon the way Employability is perceived, developed and executed. The influence of government agenda, the introduction of increased tuition fees and the metrics used within Higher Education are examples of factors that impact upon Employability. It could therefore be argued that Employability within Higher Education institutions is not completely within their control. Therefore, meaning that Employability development is being delivered potentially under restriction. For Higher Education to efficiently deliver Employability measures there is a need for industry contribution. When assessing Employability from an industry context, there are apparent needs and requirements expected for potential employees. As expected, there are differences in those requirements, but there are also some similarities. The similarities that are apparent across the different industry types refer to interpersonal skills and qualities. Information such as this is useful not only for Higher Education institutions as it allows them to cater for student and graduate readiness, but also for students themselves. Employability within the context of students is something that is lacking within literature. There are accounts of Employability from graduate perspectives, but very little relating to student perspective. The available research is largely focused on graduates from different disciplines, and as with the lack of student perspective, there is also a lack of graduate perspective amongst the student population who study sport. As outlined in the QAA model, and as highlighted within the different contexts, Employability cannot be developed or delivered in isolation, a multi stakeholder approach is crucial. This emphasises the need for research regarding student input and Employability. Higher Education and Industry/Employers already have a platform within literature, and to an extent so do graduates, but the current literature platform for students in comparison is non-existent. There is clear justification from the evidence within literature to see that Employers, Higher Education Providers and Students should be equally contributing to the development and dissemination of Employability.

2.7 THE STUDENT VOICE: MY VIEWS AS A RESEARCH STUDENT

Understanding the concept of Employability and its origins were somewhat eye opening as the concept has clearly been evident throughout history but under different names/labels. The work by Gazier (1998a, 1998b, 2001) covers seven 'obvious' operational versions of Employability which leads to questions surrounding the 'not so obvious' versions of Employability. Unfortunately, the work of Gazier is so widely used and accepted that the mention of other operational versions of Employability (not so obvious) have no mention within literature therefore leaving the seven waves of Employability as the only solid foundations of Employability origin. When researching and understanding these waves of Employability there are some distinct patterns that align with the way in which Employability is perceived but also how external influence can also alter this. As a student but also a member of society it is evident within present day that this is still the case and numerous factors dictate how Employability is perceived and utilised by multiple stakeholders. An example of this is a personal experience of being on a work placement within a football club but with no expectation of a contract as I needed to build more experience and develop my skills (the words of the club personnel). Within a month of being in this placement I was offered a contract, but not because I had developed my skills any further or built up more experience, but because to achieve a higher category status alongside EPPP guidelines more staff needed to be employed. I was literally in the right place at the right time. This example highlights that within one month the perception of Employability from the view of the employer changed from being my responsibility to theirs. As a student I understood what happened and why, but in terms of confirming my understanding of Employability as a concept, it was completely changed and demonstrated that Employability is a flexible concept dependent on the needs of the driving stakeholder at that time. My conversations with others who have been in similar positions highlighted that instances such as this are not rare but are quite common, particularly in an elite sport environment and although the work by Gazier shows a shift in Employability perception, this example is typical of "Manpower Employability". The work by Gazier highlights well, the driving forces behind each version of Employability and what has been deemed important to alter Employability perception. Throughout the seven versions there are multiple shifts including questionable metrics of assessing members of society, understanding individual mental capacity, addressing the

40

needs of the workforce, unemployment rates, individual skills assessments and understanding external factors on employees. The research from Gazier indicates that Employability has come a long way and has changed over a substantial period of time, but this may not be the case. The example highlighted above is replicable of the Employability approach that was evident between 1940-1975 which indicates that perhaps the concept of Employability is simply recycled and as previously suggested is adapted to cater for the needs of the stakeholder at that time.

The timing in which stakeholders come to the forefront seems to differ, but the identification of the 'key' stakeholders outlined by QAA (2014) suggests a way of simplifying the concept of Employability by recognising the different cogs that work together. A guide outlining key stakeholders is useful but there could also be a misconception that each stakeholder has equal input in terms of Employability perception. The literature around the concept of Employability which is outlined in more depth within Chapter 3 is largely focussed on the voices of those from industry and Higher Education institutions with very little perspective being shared from students/individuals. When considering that individuals make a workforce and without student's, Higher Education institutions would not exist, the lack of student/individual voice within research is confusing, frustrating, and unfair. The QAA highlight students as a key stakeholder, so for the voice of the student to have minimal representation within research is puzzling and this is supported by the views of Jorre De St Jorre and Oliver (2018) who state the most important beneficiaries of Employability are being left in a silent void.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to review and analyse the literature surrounding the fundamental components of interest in relation to the aims and objectives of this thesis. In relation to providing a literature-based foundation to rationalise the purpose of this thesis, the following areas will be reviewed to evidence knowledge, highlight gaps and justify the need for this area of research.

- The Concept of Employability

- Employability: Sport Student Focus

- Student Engagement within Higher Education

- Student Engagement and Employability

- Student Engagement: Sport Student Focus

- Theoretical Frameworks relating to Employability

3.1 THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY

Evidence suggests that the concept of Employability is not new and has been subjected to many studies predominantly over the last 5 decades (Sumanasiri, Yajob and Khatibi, 2015). Despite the attempts of governments, universities and employers providing their views on Employability, the concept is still unclear.

It is widely acknowledged that Employability is a contested topic and it has been reported that trying to create a definitive definition is impossible due to differing conceptualisations (Brooman and Stirk, 2020; Flanders, 1995; Tymon, Harrison and Batistic, 2019). The point of this thesis is not to arrive at a universal definition of Employability, but to understand how it is perceived through the eyes of the student and the impact of this upon their engagement. The purpose of this section is therefore to understand the different conceptualisations of Employability.

As a constantly evolving concept, it is much more difficult to define Employability than might be imagined (Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne, 2017; Williams, Dodd, Steele and

Randalll, 2016). Literature suggests that defining Employability is difficult due to the variety of stakeholders who would be considered investors in the concept (Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne, 2017). Those investors include, but are not limited to, Higher Education Institutions, Government, Employers, Graduates and Students (Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne, 2017; Matherly and Tillman, 2015; Tymon, 2013; Williams, *et al*. 2016). The multiple needs of stakeholders contribute to the difficulties of trying to define the concept and therefore theories of Employability have become increasingly complex and multi-dimensional (Rae, 2007; Williams *et al.* 2016). It has therefore been suggested within the work of Williams *et al.* (2016) that, one must first identify the perspective from which the term is being applied. Understanding the requirements and expectations from each stakeholder, delivers a different approach to the concept of Employability.

Upon reviewing the array of literature surrounding the concept of Employability, there appears to be 3 emergent conceptualisations; Industry, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Individual. Table 3 highlights the authors who have conceptualised Employability and in what way. An extensive version of this table can be found in Appendix A. When comparing these conceptualisations to the key stakeholders within the QAA model highlighted within chapter 2, they are almost identical, apart from 'student' being converted to 'individual'.

Table 3 - Literature Conceptualisations

	Conceptualisations		
	Industry	Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)	Individual
Authors	• **Bridgstock (2009)** • **Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003)** • Canadian Government Labour Force Development Board (1994) • **Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen (1998)** • **Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment (DHFETE) (2002)** • Flanders (1995) • Forrier and Sels (2003) • **Harvey, Locke and Morey (2002)** • **HM Treasury (1997)** • **Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser (2013)** • **Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert (2020)** • **Tomlinson (2012)** • Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) • **Yorke (2006)**	• AGCAS (2011) • Alexandre, Portela and Sa (2009) • Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne (2017) • Bowden et al (2000) • CBI (1999) • Dearing (1997) • Harvey (2001) • **Harvey, Locke and Morey (2002)** • **Hillage and Pollard (1998)** • **Knight and Yorke (2003)** • Pierce (2002) • **Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert (2020)** • **Stephenson (1998)** • **Tomlinson (2012)** • **Trought (2012)** • Willetts (2010) • **Yorke (2006)**	• **Bridgstock (2009)** • **Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003)** • Dacre-Pool and Sewell (2007) • **Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen (1998)** • deGrip, Van loo and Sanders (2004) • **DHFETE (2002)** • **Harvey, Locke and Morey (2002)** • **Hillage and Pollard (1998)** • **Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser (2013)** • **HM Treasury (1997)** • Klutymans and Ott (1999) • **Knight and Yorke (2003)** • McArdle (2007) • McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) • **Stephenson (1998)** • Thijssen, Van der Heijden and Rocco (2008) • Tomlinson (2007) • **Tomlinson (2012)** • **Trought (2012)** • **Tymon (2013)** • Williams et al (2016) • **Yorke (2006)**

*** **Bold** text indicates a relational conceptual approach*

3.1.1 THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY: INDUSTRY

The concept of Employability from an industry perspective appears to fluctuate based on numerous factors. There are contrasting views on Employability from an industry perspective from vague definition through to complex incorporation of multiple factors which will be discussed within this section.

Research has highlighted that Employability is the ability to secure and function in any job (Flanders, 1995; Yorke, 2006). Upon further scrutiny of the work by Yorke (2006), he is not merely stating that this is the only element of Employability as he has offered a relational conceptual approach that encompasses all 3 stakeholders as highlighted in table 3. Further exploration of the additional approaches by Yorke will be highlighted in the upcoming sections. In contrast, the work by Flanders (1995) is specifically industry driven and states that the purpose of Employability is to secure employment, therefore the concept of Employability should be built around the needs of the intended employment sector. There is an argument that this resource is outdated and a lot has changed, but this approach is still evident within other literature (DHFETE, 2002; Tomlinson, 2012; Yorke, 2006). A report by DFHETE (2002) stated that Employability is the capability to move into and within labour markets, highlighting the need for an industry focused approach. However, unlike the research by Flanders, DHFETE began to introduce how this could be achieved by considering how individual Employability perspectives can impact upon securing employment, highlighting a relational conceptual approach to Employability through industry and the individual. The shift of introducing another stakeholder to the concept of Employability is significant and highlights that there is an understanding amongst some researchers of the need for multiple stakeholder involvement within the concept. The literature highlighting that Employability is as simple as obtaining any job contradicts the suggestion of Employability being complex and multi-dimensional (Rae, 2007; Williams et al, 2016).

An aspect of Employability for consideration from an industry perspective must include the job market. Inclusion of the job market sector adds to the multi-dimensional complexities but it is a necessity. Within literature, most Employability related papers do incorporate the need for an assessment of the current labour market (Bridgstock, 2009; Brown, Hesketh and Williams, 2003; Canadian Government Labour Force Development Board, 1994; Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen, 1998; DHFETE, 2002; Flanders, 1995; Forrier and

Sels, 2003; Harvey, Locke and Morey, 2002; Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser, 2013; HM Treasury, 1997; Romgens,Scoupe and Beausaert, 2020; Thijssen, Van der Heijden and Rocco, 2008; Tomlinson, 2012; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006; Yorke, 2006). However, there are some researchers who have conceptualised Employability to be an interdependent of the job market (Daniel, Andrea and Gaughen, 1998; Tomlinson, 2012). Tomlinson (2012) states within his research, that the position of labour markets determines the meaning of Employability at that given time. It is understandable that employer needs will dictate employee requirement and that this will fluctuate, but when trying to conceptualise Employability against an inconsistent stakeholder, this is difficult. Within the research by Tomlinson (2012) the difficulties of conceptualising Employability against a constantly moving target allowed him to consider other stakeholders to attempt a more coherent approach to the concept; HEIs and individual. These additional conceptual approaches will be discussed within the upcoming sections of this chapter. When considering the position of the job market and how this addresses the conceptualisation of Employability the research by Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen (1998) is vastly different to the views of Tomlinson.   Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen (1998) report that the temperamental state of the labour market brings into question the need for Employability. The authors suggest that when the labour market looks bleak, there is no need for Employability to be considered as there are fewer jobs available. The conceptualisation of Employability from both Tomlinson and Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen, share that the state of the job market is important to the meaning of Employability. However, the views of Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen (1998) are extreme to suggest that Employability is redundant if the job market is not flourishing. This suggests that the concept of Employability is merely seen as useful when the job market is allowing.

Bridgstock (2009) reported that the concept of Employability can be driven by a list of employer requirements and therefore bringing industry to the forefront of the conceptualisation of Employability. The work by Bridgstock includes contradictory statements in relation to this as she further adds that building an employer centred approach, does not provide accurate preparation for longevity across sectors. There are hints within the research of Bridgstock that she favours an approach incorporating transferable skills as appose to specific employer requirements. This is further justified with the suggestion of individual relevance when understanding the concept of Employability, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The research from Bridgstock follows a similar view to Van der

Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) who state that individual Employability traits are expected to mirror those required from the industry. The research from Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) mention specifically about the need for occupational knowledge and expertise, and also corporate sense. Although this research from Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden seem industry specific, it could be argued that corporate sense and occupational expertise could be relevant across multiple sectors and therefore adding to the views of Bridgstock around transferrable skills. Statements relating to transferable skills seem to be more prominent within 21st century literature, this highlights that although there are still industry driven conceptualisations around Employability, there is also the appreciation of a multi stakeholder approach. This is also captured within the research of Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser (2013) who consider both industry and individual conceptualisations for Employability. The work by Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser (2013) state that as new industry sectors emerge and therefore employment opportunities increase, this allows for industries to be selective within their recruitment of employees. A selective approach to recruitment is more robust than what has been mentioned within earlier literature, but this also means that more emphasis is placed on the individual candidates themselves such as individual personality traits. A criticism of a robust selective process from industry could lead to a forced industry centred Employability approach, as the shift has moved from a recruitment driven industry to selective.

This shift has been noted within research specifically from Forrier and Sels (2003) and more recently Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert (2020) who conceptualise Employability from an industry perspective whilst mentioning the need for individual development. Forrier and Sels (2003) use the Employability process model to highlight factors that can influence the chances of obtaining employment. The model incorporates the importance of understanding the current labour market, using this to decide whether a change is needed and then assessing the ease of change alongside the willingness to change (Forrier and Sels, 2003). Forrier and Sels decided that incorporating a model within their research was crucial to add the individual element within the industry conceptualisation of Employability. Inclusion of individual input was needed due to the complexities of Employability and the rapidly changing landscape of labour markets. This view was shared within recent research by Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert (2020) who adopt a 5-dimension approach to capture the individual input when reporting on an industry driven conceptualisation of Employability. The paper by Romgens,

Scoupe and Beausaert (2020) is significant based upon their integration of theoretical frameworks which is lacking across literature when Employability has been conceptualised with an industry focus. The research discusses the interactions between the need for Human Capital Theory, Self-Reflection, Social Capital, Lifelong learning and a healthy work-life balance. Within the research by Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert (2020) they discuss that once employment is secured there is still the need to enhance Employability to prepare for unexpected industry/career changes, and therefore an individual approach embedded within an industry conceptualisation would be beneficial. The introduction of the Human Capital Theory is of particular interest as this theory encompasses education as a driver, which justifies within this paper the introduction of a 6-dimension approach focussed towards HEIs, therefore offering a relational conceptual approach to Employability consisting of industry and HEIs, with a hint of individual responsibility embedded.

Research from Tomlinson (2012) highlights that in order for an industry conceptualised approach of Employability to be efficient, HEIs need to be considered in this approach to ensure that graduates are fit for purpose before entering the job market. This view was shared within earlier literature from Harvey, Locke and Morey (2002) who mentioned the need for industry and education to work together in order to create an alignment between the 2 stakeholders. The need for industry and education to work together is essential as with the concept of Employability, industry is the outcome, therefore education is the process.

3.1.2 THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY: HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (HEIs)

Yorke (2006) has commented that defining and understanding Employability within the arena of Higher Education is multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning. The work from Yorke highlights that Employability can hold different meanings to different people which adds to the complexities of the concept. Employability as a complex concept is a reoccurring comment that appears throughout literature, so the statements by Yorke are not surprising, but in fact adds to a shared viewpoint within most Employability literature.

Although Employability is complex, it still needs to be explored and better understood. There is a need for HEI conceptualisations of Employability to encompass the need for an awareness of industry demand. As highlighted within section 3.2, there are often relational crossovers, including HEI and Industry conceptualisations. As previously mentioned, Tomlinson (2012) introduced the idea within his work of a required appreciation between both HEIs and industry in relation to the effectiveness of Employability. He outlined that HEIs need to incorporate the shifting industry needs of Employability within a HEI conceptual approach. This is closely linked to the HEI concept of Employability presented by Knight and Yorke (2006) who concluded that Employability within HEIs must include instruction and tasks that replicate the working world which can be demonstrated via the USEM model (Understanding, Skills, Efficacy and Metacognition) which was introduced by Knight and Yorke (2003). The introduction of this model was proposed for purposes of HEIs, and a way in which they could develop understanding of Employability within students and encourage self-reflection for Employability development. The self-reflection component of the USEM model refers to a relational concept of Employability between HEIs and the individual, which will be further explored in section 3.4.

The conceptualisation of Employability within HEIs has also been referred to alongside University Politics. The main purpose of this is that at times the importance of Employability from a HEI perspective, has been portrayed as a tick box exercise, recognition for institutional achievement through the use of questionable metrics and a simple buzzword (Agcas, 2011; Alexandre, Bowden et al, 2000; Harvey, 2001; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Portela and Sa, 2009). This was highlighted also in the work of Willetts (2010) who stated that university expectations and a target driven culture, allow universities to utilise Employability for their own agendas. The main criticism of this approach is that no consideration has been given to the conceptualisation of Employability from other viewpoints. This also does not fall into line with any of the varied definitions that have been present within literature over the decades.

Literature has also suggested that the concept of Employability from the perspectives of HEIs does include a student focus, and in fact mentions the idea of Universities helping the students create an 'identity'. Creating the identity based on the concept of Employability includes preparing students for the transition of becoming a graduate (Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne, 2017). An additional component to this is ensuring that students are equipped with transferable and basic core skills (Harvey, 2001; Pierce, 2002; Romgens,

Scoupe and Beausaert, 2020). Earlier work by Stephenson (1998) shared the same views supporting the need for skill development as a basic service from HEIs, but he also added that an element of psychological development would need to be considered to encourage self-development within students.

The HEI conceptualisation of Employability, when considering students, refers to them as mainly graduates, and this is a common theme within the vast majority of literature. Using the term graduates implies the end of an educational journey, and inferring that there is little to no HEI conceptualisation of Employability that addresses students, whilst still in education. Research by Pierce (2002) does mention that Employability within HEIs refers to students being prepared for work via work experience opportunities. Gaining work experience should be encouraged, but within the work by Pierce, there was no discussion about how this would be monitored or tracked for development, as he states that experience can be conducted formally or informally. The pattern of no monitoring continues when further conceptualisations are included referring to graduates. The concept of Employability for HEIs is ensuring that graduates are prepared for work by acquiring graduate attributes to successfully obtain employment (Harvey, Locke and Morey, 2002; Pierce, 2002; Trought, 2012).

3.1.3 THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY: INDIVIDUAL

Individual conceptualisation of Employability has evolved, from basic skill acquisition to the incorporation of psychological theories. Within older literature there is a pattern of Employability being perceived on an individual level as the ability to complete tasks, being transferable and acquire skills that will lead to employment (Dearing, 1997; deGrip, Van loo and Sanders, 2004; Klutymans and Ott, 1999; Stephenson, 1998; Thijssen, Van der Heijden and Rocco, 2008; Tomlinson, 2007; Yorke, 2006). However, more recent literature has highlighted this is not enough. As mentioned within section 3.1.1 the job market is an everchanging landscape, meaning industry has become more selective, this has also led to new approaches when conceptualising individual Employability. In a selective job market, it is important to enhance individual development, consequently this led to a new approach when evaluating individual Employability to look at how and perhaps the limitations on

personal Employability development. The individual conceptualisation of Employability now encompasses psychology to address the 'whys' and 'hows' individual Employability is perceived. The inclusion of psychology from an individual perspective has been deemed important for those who simply cannot acquire certain skills, or function in certain roles, the element of psychology allows individuals to understand why that might be, as it may not be a physical problem but rather a psychological one.

Individual conceptualisation of Employability shifted towards looking at personal identity and individual mindset, incorporating an individual's proactiveness, attitude, willingness, self-belief and self-esteem (Bridgstock, 2009; Dacre-Pool and Sewell, 2007; deGrip, Van loo and Sanders, 2004; Knight and Yorke, 2003; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Tomlinson, 2007; Tomlinson, 2012; Trought, 2012). The introduction of psychology playing a role within individual Employability has remained within literature and therefore is deemed a fixed component within the individual conceptualisation of Employability. The inclusion of psychology into this conceptualisation has allowed research to utilise specific psychological theories when explaining Employability from an individual perspective. The prominent theories that have been used within individual conceptualisation include, Human Capital, Protean Career Theory, Social Capital and Structural Capital (Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser, 2013; Williams *et al*. 2016).

3.1.4 THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYABILITY: CONCEPTUAL SUMMARY

The conceptualisations of Employability have highlighted that there are many things impacting on each conceptualisation. The concept of Employability from an industry viewpoint has highlighted that over time the concept has evolved from a simplistic definition to a highly contested concept. This is a pattern that is shared across each conceptualisation. Within industry and HEI conceptualisation, there is also a shared view of the importance of knowing the state of current job markets and industry demand. Shared views across stakeholders, demonstrates the relational conceptualisation of Employability and emphasises the importance of a multi stakeholder approach. Literature from an industry perspective has highlighted that as recruiters become more selective, they have developed an appreciation for the need of assessment towards individual traits and interpersonal skills. This is a view

that is shared across all conceptualisations. The dominant occurrence across each conceptualisation is the consideration for the individual/student. When assessing the literature around Employability from an industry perspective, this conceptualisation has always had a presence and the pendulum at times has swung in favour of industry being the main stakeholder. Research from a HEI perspective regarding Employability has been given the same amount of regard, with the pendulum sitting between those 2 stakeholders. However, as each conceptualisation highlights the requirement for individual consideration within Employability, there is evidently a need for this to be captured. From an individual perspective within research, it is mainly dominated from a graduate focus. Table 4 highlights the themes that have emerged from each conceptualisation, with the highlighted themes indicating shared views.

Table 4 - Emergent Themes for each conceptualisation

Industry	HEI	Student/Individual
** Basic Definition	** Multiple Meaning	** Psychological Development
** Job Market Status	** Industry Demand	** Individual Skills/Capabilities
Industry Dictates Skill Requirements	Teaching and Learning	** External Factors (other stakeholders)
** Individual Traits are Important	University Politics	
** Industry needs to work with HEIs	** Identity	
	** Graduates vs Students	

*** Shared views across conceptualisations*

The shared views from each conceptualisation have been condensed to show the relational conceptualisations that have emerged from the literature as evidenced in Table 5.

Table 5 - Relational Conceptualisations

Industry	HEI	Student/Individual
Definition		
Job Market Status/Industry Demand		
Individual Traits/Identity/Capabilities		
	Individual Psychological Development to create an 'Identity'	
Stakeholders need to work together		

Sections 3.1.1 to 3.1.3 have addressed the way Employability has been conceptualised within literature, however some of these conceptualisations have not been formed through empirical research. The imminent upcoming sections have been formulated to review empirical research to capture how Employability is conceptualised from the voice of each stakeholder.

3.2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: INDUSTRY

As evidenced within section 3.1.1 industry conceptualisations of Employability differ based upon factors such as the state of the job market, industries becoming selective within recruitment and the influence of other stakeholders. Although there are understandings surrounding industry conceptualisation of Employability, it is important to scrutinise empirical research that has been conducted from an industry viewpoint, which is what will be covered within this section.

Understanding the needs of industry is an important aspect alongside the concept of Employability. Without this knowledge, it would be difficult to ensure that individuals are equipped with the necessary skills needed for employment. Acquiring Employability requirements from industry can be difficult to digest based on different sector needs (Archer and Davison, 2008; Robles, 2012; Succi, 2018; Succi and Canovi, 2020). As highlighted within

the previous chapter (2.4), different sectors, require different skillsets. This can be somewhat problematic, not only for the individual but for other stakeholders such as training providers or HEIs when trying to align Employability requirements to industry. The evidence of literature as demonstrated within section 2.4, indicates that although there are differences across sectors in relation to Employability requirements, there is also a common theme relating to soft skills and competencies. It is expected that sector requirements will differ, and this is largely based on the needs for specific roles across industries (Heckman and Kautz, 2012; Moore and Morton, 2017). However, with the research surrounding industry requirements, there is a specific need for soft skills and core competencies. If the industry perspective was not considered then there is a risk of misalignment between individual skillsets and industry expectations (Ashraf, Hou, Kirmani, Ilyas, Zaida and Ashraf, 2018; Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser, 2013;). A study conducted by Saunders and Zuzel (2010) reported that employers preferred personal attributes and core skills more than technical and subject–specific skills; a finding that is supported by others (Archer and Davison, 2008; Cotton, 2001; Felstead, Gallie, Green and Zhou, 2007). The study by Saunders and Zuzel could be considered outdated, but the message of personal attributes and core skills, is still prominent within current research. Cake, Bell, Mossop and Mansfield (2021) examines the industry perspective on Employability within the health sector and states that effective healthcare practice must be grounded in and concordant with attitudes and personal values, whilst enabling the professional use of self. The views of Cake *et al.* (2021) are shared across numerous sectors including Business (Jackson, 2013; Santos, 2020), Animal Services (Bell, Cake and Mansfield, 2019; Bell, Cake and Mansfield, 2018; Cake *et al*. 2016) and Education (Jackson and Wilton, 2017; Minocha, Hristov and Reynolds, 2017). The advantage of a shared perspective highlights a rare opportunity for clarity within the complexities of the concept of Employability. The shared views around core competencies and personal attributes is a significant platform to build upon. Understanding that developing soft skills and creating opportunities for development, enables other Employability stakeholders the opportunity to develop the concept of Employability in alignment with industry (Heckman and Kautz, 2012; Succi, 2018).

3.3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: HEIs

Section 3.1.2 highlighted that within the broader HEI conceptualisation of Employability, there are some key components to the conceptualisation. Those components included HEI politics, an appreciation of industry demand and requirements, teaching and learning strategies and graduate requirements. The aim of this section is to evaluate the empirical literature focussing on Employability within HEIs.

As signalled within the QAA model within chapter 2, Higher Education is a key stakeholder in relation to the concept of Employability. The significance of gaining Higher Education perspectives within Employability literature is pertinent. Much like the perspectives of industry throughout Employability literature, Higher Education has a strong voice within the research. Higher Education is not an entity, but instead is constructed by numerous components such as teaching staff and the influence of government policy (Harvey and Green, 1993; Hill, Lomas and MacGregor, 2003). The perspective of Higher Education is therefore one of many components within an institution. One of those components is the government, and the policies that are created for Higher Education and the subsequent impact upon individual university policies. Government policy provides guidelines for the core components expected within Higher Education, universities are then able to interpret this information and structure their own policies around these guidelines (Capano, 2011). It has been explained that government policies provide the foundations of Higher Education requirements, but it is down to individual institutions to shape and build upon those foundations to create a unique identity (Wood and Su, 2017). A notable influence of government impact within the UK is the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) for higher education. As a metric the TEF can be useful as it is used as a measure for teaching quality. The significance of this information clarifies not only the student thoughts based on teaching, but it can also be an indicator to the way different staff teach across programmes (Gunn, 2018; Willetts, 2015; Wood and Su, 2017). Understanding the different approaches to teaching and learning can add insight into how the different approaches impact upon student engagement. In relation to Employability, and due to the contrasting views on the concept, it is important to understand the perspectives of the Higher Education staff. In a study by De Hei (2016) it has been reported that university teaching staff can influence not only engagement, but the beliefs and perspectives of the students they teach (Evans and

Kozhevnikova, 2011; Fransen, Kirschner and Erkens, 2011). In relation to this thesis and the idea of capturing a student perspective throughout their academic journey, the study by De Hei justifies the need to explore influences that could impact on their perspective. Staff perspective is particularly important as highlighted by Ferns (2012) who suggested that teaching staff within universities can believe they are adequately developing Employability skills, but this may not align with the student beliefs. In her study, Fern concludes that university staff can feel competent with the concept of Employability, but if this does not translate through to student demonstration, then further exploration is needed. The concept of Employability amongst higher education staff can differ dramatically (Gunn, 2018; Wood and Su, 2017). There are multiple reasons why this may be, including personal views, previous experiences or Employability misconceptions, but research suggests it can also be generational (Tian and Lu, 2017). Teaching staff within higher education appear to be starting academic careers at a much younger age (Tian and Lu, 2017). Younger members of academic staff have therefore likely been more exposed to the concept of Employability through their own student experience. This does not mean that older academic members of staff are averse to the concept of Employability, but it could highlight differences of perspective amongst academics. Curran (2017) suggests that staff experiences and career background can often lead to a change in beliefs which can impact on teaching viewpoints. Curran (2017) further adds to this by stating that within Higher Education the staff profile can be vast and diverse. The diversity amongst staff can be seen both positively and negatively, from multiple experiences being brought into the classroom to unpopular opinions that add confusion. The majority of research is in favour of a diverse approach to a Higher Education workforce as it allows both practitioners and academics to share the same space and offer different approaches to teaching (Schmitt, Duggan, Williams and McMillan, 2015). It is not uncommon for individuals working within the same institution to hold different beliefs. However, this does become problematic when those different belief systems are shared across student cohorts. In a study by Ferns (2012) who looked at staff influence within Higher Education, the point is made that students can alter their views or opinions based on the relationships they build with staff. An area of consideration would therefore be, the more staff that students interact with who have differing beliefs on topics they teach, could cause further confusion for the student. The need for understanding staff perception on an already complex topic of

Employability, is vital to assessing different perspectives, how this translates to the student population and the impact.

3.4 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH: INDIVIDUAL\STUDENT

Individual conceptualisation of Employability highlighted in section 3.1.3 includes a strong theme of the need for skills, personal attributes and individual characteristics to be included within individual conceptualisation. As a positive, this theme also falls into alignment with the needs of industry, but the individual conceptualisation is not based on individual perception. The individual conceptualisation has been largely formed from academics who have researched industry requirements and therefore assumed an individual conceptualisation to align with those needs. The aim of this section is to critically analyse empirical literature that has captured individual perspective.

There is evidence within literature that suggests student perspective is not always at the forefront of research when it comes to Employability (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006; Rae, 2007; Rothwell, Herbert and Rothwell, 2008; Tymon 2013). Surprisingly this is also the case when research papers include titles that specifically reference individual or student development (Brooman and Stirk, 2020; Crossman and Clarke, 2012; Pounder, 2008; Wang, Peng, Xu, Simbi, Lin and Teng, 2020). Only a small number of studies have been discovered that focus upon student perspective around Employability. One of those studies was by Tymon (2013) who stated that students are the intended recipients of Employability skill development, and therefore their views are important. The views of Tymon surrounding the importance of hearing the student voice, is a shared opinion across many areas of literature (Crossman and Clarke, 2012; Moreau and Leathwood, 2006; Rae, 2007; Rothwell, Herbert and Rothwell, 2008; Wang *et al*. 2020). The shared views within literature are therefore somewhat perplexing when in reality, student perspective is rarely researched. There are studies that aim to address the use of Employability and measuring Employability (Boffo, 2019; Harvey, 2001; Lim, Teck, Ching and Chui, 2016; Saunders and Zuzel, 2010). However, like the points made by Tymon within his research, the student voice in yet again ignored.

The lack of inclusion for student perspective within research is not based upon lack of opportunity. Wang *et al*. (2020) conducted research around using transformational

leadership to enhance student Employability. The researchers emphasised looking for relationships between problem-based learning and Employability development. The results from this study did signify a relationship between the factors based upon the results of a closed question survey. Lack of information was provided regarding how Employability was measured based on student perspective. It could be argued that within this research Employability is used in a contextual sense to look deeper into the effectiveness of transformational leadership. An interesting dynamic for this study, is the use of transformational leadership, as it is suggested that the use of this is adopted by those who focus on the student perspective of learning in addition to student wellbeing (Pounder, 2014; Oqvist and Malmstrom, 2016; Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam and Brown, 2014; Van Dinther, Dochy and Segers, 2011). The use of transformational leadership without the evidence of student perspective within this study is somewhat confusing and when coupled with the lack of staff perception to add context to teaching, the findings are therefore ambiguous.

The lack of student perspective within Employability literature has highlighted a significant gap within research. Of the very few research papers that have placed focus on student perspective, the conclusions formulated have resulted in an unclear picture, due to lack of data (Moreau and Leathwood, 2006; Sin, Taveres and Amaral, 2019; Tomlinson, 2007). A study by Tymon (2013) is one of specific relevance in relation to the purposes of this thesis, as he decided to address the student perspective on Employability. This study is particularly pertinent to the aims of this thesis, therefore a more critical take on this article is required. Tymon conducted empirical research by collecting data from university students across levels 4-6 within business and marketing degree programmes. The identity of the university has not been disclosed, the only details provided is that this research was conducted within 1 post 92 university in the UK. The data was collected via focus groups, with the exception of questionnaires for those studying at level 6, with no explanation provided within the article for the change in collection method. Within the first question, participants were asked their views on what Employability is and the skills/attributes it may encompass. The results from this question showed that there was large agreement surrounding the need for possession of skills and that personal attributes are inherent of Employability. There was however less alignment in relation to the longer-term concept of Employability, and the only participants that acknowledged a long-term approach was those at level 6. This is somewhat concerning based upon the literature around the concept of Employability that speaks of it being lifelong

and a forward-thinking concept that should be refreshed throughout life (Bridgstock, 2009; Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth, 2004; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Knight and Yorke, 2006; Rothwell and Arnold, 2007). Although this is concerning, it is also not surprising based on the way in which student perspectives on Employability are captured, or rather not captured within literature.

As previously mentioned by Tymon, students are the recipients of Employability, so to allude from their perspectives and views is concerning. The lack of research around student Employability perspectives, is quite limiting as most only offer a snapshot of perspectives, rather than a longitudinal approach. There is however, one study that has adopted a longitudinal approach to the concept of Employability. In a study by Moreau and Leathwood (2006) they try to capture a more holistic perspective of Employability. The researchers mention that students were split into different groups and each group would utilise a different method of data collection, no information was provided about decisions around group splits. The article states that only 18 participants were interviewed on an annual basis, but again no justification for this has been provided. The longitudinal approach of this study is rare in relation to Employability. The conclusions from this paper seem to focus more heavily on graduate outcome, therefore leaving questions about the use of the purpose of the study being longitudinal. There are references within the article around using the retrospective information as a reference point when speaking to the graduate participants, but there is a sense that more could be done with the longitudinal information, that potentially could be beneficial for current students within higher education.

Student perspectives of Employability are few and far between, and when they are present within literature there is only a snapshot of time that is presented. This justifies potentially why students do not consider Employability to be a long-term approach if their voice is only considered at minimal sporadic points within their education. It is reported that capturing student perspective is crucial to addressing not only the developmental needs of the student but to also ensure that the education provider is offering an all-round service for the students (Villar and Albertin, 2010). It has also been suggested that lack of student input can impact on learner motivation and student engagement (Gold, Holden, Iles, Stewart and Beardwell, 2010; Rothwell and Arnold, 2007; Rothwell, Herbert and Rothwell, 2008; Rutter, Dunn, Plomin, Simonov, Pickles, Maughan, Ormel, Mayer and Eaves, 1997; Seibert, Kraimer and Crant, 2001).

It is evident that there is a clear need for the student voice to be heard. Employability is a significant part of the university experience for all students, so gathering an understanding of student perspectives within Employability is crucial.

3.5 EMPLOYABILITY: SPORT STUDENT FOCUS

As previously mentioned Employability literature is vast, however when searching for literature with a sport student focus, the research is extremely limited. There are however some researchers who have provided some insight into this untouched area. Keech (2006) reported that HEIs are increasingly questioned about the effectiveness in preparing students for the sport industry. This is largely due to feedback received from sport and leisure employers who feel that many graduates do not have the skills to take up employment within the industry after graduation (Keech, 2006). To address this concern Gittus (2002) emphasised the need for HEIs to provide vocational pathways that promote and encourage the need for personal skill development. Providing alternative pathways would promote opportunities to develop transferable skills and therefore assist with the complaints of the industry towards HEIs as reported by Keech. Ronkainen, Aggerholm, Ryba and Allen-Collinson (2021) also raises that there is an assumption that sport students are active learners and therefore need to experience what they are learning to develop. The comments from Ronkainen *et al.* (2021) align with the views of Keech who focussed on the importance of work-related opportunities as a way of promoting Employability amongst sport students. These views are in affiliation with the views of Ravenscroft and Gilchrist (2005) who encourages relevant work-based experiences for students studying sport to apply their theoretical knowledge into a familiar practical surrounding.

3.6 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION

Student engagement is a term used to describe the level of interest, involvement, and investment that students have in their learning and academic experiences. It refers to the extent to which students participate in and take ownership of their education, and how they connect with the material and the learning community.

Student engagement is an important factor within Higher Education institutions both in the UK and internationally. It is therefore not surprising that research within this area is vast and constantly developing. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), student engagement is composed of three dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. The behavioral dimension refers to the visible actions that students take in relation to their learning, such as attending class, completing assignments, and participating in discussions. The emotional dimension refers to the affective aspect of engagement, such as the feelings of interest, enthusiasm, and enjoyment that students experience in their learning. The cognitive dimension refers to the mental effort and investment that students put into their learning, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and deep learning strategies. Research has shown that high levels of student engagement are associated with positive academic outcomes, such as higher grades, greater retention, and increased likelihood of graduation (Kuh, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Therefore, promoting student engagement is an important goal for educators and educational institutions. By understanding student engagement, it allows Higher Education providers and researchers the opportunity to look for areas of development and also concern. Much like the contested concept of Employability, there are debates within literature that raise questions about the definitive meaning of student engagement (Axelson and Flick, 2010; Coates, 2007; Kuh, 2009; Skinner and Belmont, 1993). However, a study by Groccia and Hunter (2012) concluded that student engagement is multidimensional and emphasises the importance of external influences triggering psychological responses within individuals, and vice versa. The conclusions by Groccia and Hunter are also shared within recent literature around student engagement and participation (Geertshuis, 2019; Hamill, Nguyen and Henderson, 2020; Noble and McGrath, 2015; Rusk and Waters, 2015). The external factors mentioned by Groccia and Hunter include family, peers, institution, tutors, culture and environment. Any shifts within or across those external factors can create a wave of emotions that can impact on student engagement (Geertshuis, 2019; Groccia, 2018). Equally, any change within individual psychological processing can impact on those external factors (Geertshuis, 2019; Groccia, 2018). There are some links between internal processing and external influence when it comes to student engagement. The use of the word multidimensional by Groccia and Hunter is valuable when understanding that student engagement is a partnership between the individual (internal processes) and interchangeable external factors. Due to this notion of a 'partnership', the role of Higher

Education in student engagement cannot take complete ownership, but they do still have a role to play, particularly with the external factors of institution and tutors (Barnacle and Dall'Alba, 2017; Macfarlane, 2017; Gibbs and Coffey, 2004; Zepke, 2015). Zepke and Leach (2010) report there are 6 dominant themes that impact upon student engagement. Those themes are, student motivation, interaction between student and staff, interaction between peers, institutional support, active citizenship and non-institutional support. Groves, Sellars, Smith and Barber (2015) utilised the work of Zepke and Leach to ascertain and understand student engagement amongst undergraduate sport students. Groves *et al.* (2015) reported that student motivation was a significant factor and suggested that degree students need to increase their perceived competence within academic tasks at the earliest opportunity. Within their research Groves *et al.* (2015) highlighted that staff-student relationship building is crucial and their research emphasised this even further since the introduction of increased tuition fees. Aldcroft (2011) shared similar views to the research that has emerged from Groves *et al.* (2015) who concludes that tutor interaction can significantly impact on the psychological components that are prevalent factors within student engagement. Groves *et al.* (2015) strongly concluded that student-teacher interactions have become one of the most significant factors for encouraging student engagement.

The importance of student engagement is even more critical with the changes across Higher Education, and the constant debates, predominantly in the UK surrounding the increase in student tuition fees. The growing pressures on universities due to tuition fee increases has now become a topic of conversation within student engagement literature and there is a shared view amongst some researchers that there is a sense of entitlement from students which negatively impacts on engagement levels (Canning, 2017; Groves *et al.* 2015; Millican, 2014; Vaughan, 2014). There are concerns surrounding how student expectations can impact upon engagement. In a study by Leach (2019) further clarity is provided by stating that the increase in fees has brought a sense of ownership to the student that was once not present, but with this ownership comes a sense of entitlement and choice of whether to engage or not. It could be therefore argued that the feeling of entitlement also brings the notion of the right to be qualified, as oppose to earning a qualification. It has been reported that in exchange for a fee, students are the consumers expecting to receive a 'value for money' education, designed to equip them with knowledge and skills to gain employment and career advancement in the competitive global marketplace (Davies and Bansel, 2007;

Frankham, 2017; Harris, 2007; Leach, 2019). Leach (2019) adds that students are now being portrayed as customers who compare and contrast course, colleges and universities as they would with any other service with consumer protection. The use of the terms customer and consumer could be used in any industry, which proves that education is simply falling into the metaphorical production line of business due to supply, demand and expectations. Some would argue that the tuition fee increase has given students a level of power that applies uncomfortable pressures to higher education (Frankham, 2017; Leach, 2017; Lenton, 2015; Palfreyman and Tapper, 2014). The pressures from the student voice have catalysed a shift in the enhancement of performance metrics for Higher Education. It could be suggested that the power that is now held amongst the student population, is powerful enough to dictate how Higher Education could be shaped in the future and placing academic and political decisions as the supporting acts. Although student voice in relation to Employability is quiet, students are still offered the opportunity to be heard in other ways, such as assessing student progress and ultimately graduate success.

3.7 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

The willingness to engage with Employability related curriculum, is a crucial first step towards benefiting from the concept. To take advantage of the skills and competencies that can come from Employability specific curriculum, there must be a proactive nature about the student (Gulikers, Bastiaens and Kirschner, 2006; Robins and Gower, 2003; Smith, 2012). Jorre de St Jorre and Oliver (2018) suggest that willingness to engage is especially important with Employability, as unlike content specific knowledge, Employability is something that can only be developed by the practical application from the individual. An aim of this thesis is to assess how Employability perception impacts on engagement levels, therefore it is crucial to identify and understand how perception is developed and what impacts upon that. There are currently processes in place that take account of student engagement with Employability such as career specific university departments and assessments based around work related placements (Jorre de St Jorre and Oliver, 2018). There is however very little mention surrounding student engagement with Employability from an extracurricular perspective, and how this is monitored. Smith (2012) reported that often students are classified as not

engaging based on misinterpretation of student engagement. Smith also reported that there is minimal conversation within literature surrounding the importance of measuring extracurricular engagement in an academic capacity. Within earlier research by Robins and Gowar (2003) they reported that not all student learning takes place in the classroom and therefore student engagement metrics should account for this. However, the way in which student engagement alongside Employability is measured is often brought into question.

When evaluating Employability within Higher Education, it is important to establish a well-structured approach to data collection that is representative of student populations. The metrics that are most commonly used within the UK include the Destination for Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey and Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data. Metrics such as DLHE and LEO have been introduced in the higher education sector to provide insight into graduate destinations (Cunningham and Christie, 2019). When comparing DLHE to LEO, DLHE offers a snapshot of graduate destination 6 months after leaving higher education, whereas LEO adopts a longitudinal approach and captures data from 1 – 10 years after students leave (HESA, 2021). In a similar vein to that of the NSS, these are metrics that again are used at the end of the academic journey and therefore has no benefit to the students who engage with them. Upon reviewing the DLHE questions, there is only one section that makes reference to the higher education experience. Participants are asked in the form of a Likert scale, how well their course prepared them for employment, with no opportunity for elaboration. Data obtained from LEO moves even further away from the concept of Employability and is used to obtain information on graduate salaries in an attempt to correlate salaries with obtaining a degree (Patrignani, Conlon and Hedges, 2017). When considering the information within the previous chapter regarding understanding Employability, it is evident from these 2 metrics, that Employability is not being measured according to how the concept is defined. In 2017 the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) who developed the DLHE survey, decided to re-evaluate and replace the DLHE survey with a new survey named 'Graduate Outcomes' (HESA, 2021). There are 2 main differences between the DLHE and Graduate Outcomes survey. Graduate Outcomes collects data from graduates 15 months after leaving education, unlike 6 months for DLHE. There is also a welcomed change in the Graduate Outcome survey as there appears to be more focus on Employability as part of the student journey. Participants are asked to reflect on their time in higher education and comment how their degree programme impacted on their current

and future plans, as well as listing the skills acquired whilst studying. The Graduate Outcomes survey is attempting to mix outcome with educational process, which is something that is missing from both the DLHE and LEO surveys. It has been raised that based upon the questions within the DLHE, LEO and Graduate Outcomes surveys, is the measure really Employability, or rather employment (Bridgstock and Jackson, 2019).

There is an apparent lack of data capture relating to both Employability and student engagement during the academic journey of an undergraduate student. The surveys mentioned within this section, capture the data once the student has left the education system, and therefore leaving no opportunity for further development. Aside from institutional intervention, there is also no formal metric for the sole purpose of measuring student engagement. Components of the NSS survey do attempt to capture student engagement, but again this is at the end of degree programmes.

3.8 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: SPORT STUDENT FOCUS

There is limited research available around Employability and students studying sport. Research has highlighted that Employability amongst students studying sport has been promoted using 3 different approaches (Hugh-Jones, Sutherland and Cross, 2006). Those approaches include embedding Employability within subject specific curriculum, offering Employability specific modules or allowing a university led careers service for enhancement of Employability development. Arguments have been raised to encourage and discourage each approach, so like the concept itself, the delivery mode is often contested. Gittus (2002) states that embedding Employability content within the curriculum can risk losing the concept. Gittus further adds that embedding Employability as a secondary topic also signifies the lack of value given to the concept, if there is an attempt to hide it within content driven modules. However, Miragaia and Soares (2017) states that teaching Employability specific content can be quite dry and an efficient approach with this can often depend on the student cohort. Miragaia and Soares (2017) adds further by suggesting that students who study sport prefer involvement in learning, so Employability content can be delivered as a way of getting students actively involved in subject specific sessions. In their research Edwards and Usher

(2001) provided an example of subject specific learning that was then coupled with a presentation task for the students, highlighting the subject specific content, but whilst developing skills such as presenting and communication. In contrast to the views of Miragaia and Soares (2017, Ravenscroft and Gilchrist (2005) believe that Employability merits its own place within the body of curriculum. It is suggested that student learning should be transparent and therefore no hidden agendas should be present. However, some research is suggesting that the idea of stand-alone Employability modules is something that is difficult for students to embrace and often leads to lack of engagement. There is a shortage of research around student engagement amongst sport students. Most research seems to focus on sport as a discipline to assist student engagement, rather than the students who study sport. Research by Vinson, Nixon, Walsh, Walker, Mitchell and Zaitseva (2010) investigated ways to encourage student engagement amongst sport development students.   They reported that they created 'transition programmes' which encompassed, activity-based sessions, reflective practice and subject based practical sessions. The outcome of the research highlighted that utilising student-centred teaching styles, made the students feel part of their own learning and helped build good relationships with staff. Vinson *et al.* (2010) also comment on the significance of building relationships to maintain or improve student engagement. Although the research by Vinson *et al.* (2010) is applicable, there is no direct points made within this article about engagement with Employability, as it has highlighted a more generalised approach to engagement.

3.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS RELATING TO EMPLOYABILITY

The difficulties with the concept of Employability makes creating an idealistic conceptual framework complex (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Peeters, Nelissen, De Cuyper, Forrier, Verbruggen and De Witte, 2019). The interacting variables and the many variations on the definition of Employability have led to many authors stating that no definitive conceptual framework can exist that will be fit for every purpose (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Klutymans and Ott, 1999; Misra and Mishra, 2011; Peeters *et al*. 2019). There are however attempts within literature to utilise specific theories to try and assess relational links in the hope of moving closer towards a useable framework for most around the concept of Employability.

Human capital is a theory that is continually appearing around Employability literature in relation to the use of a framework. Some research suggests that Human Capital Theory can be used in isolation as a theoretical framework for Employability (Hoxby and Avery, 2013; Keeley, 2007; Marginson, 2019), whilst others combine the theory alongside another (Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert, 2020; Teichler, 2009). Like the concept of Employability, Human Capital Theory has been reinterpreted over several decades, but there is a consistency present within each interpretation. Human Capital Theory utilises education as the driver for acquiring knowledge, experience and capability, that will lead to successful employment and higher earnings, labelling education as a secure investment for individual development (Baartman and De Bruijn, 2011; Smith, 2010; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006). In the US in the 1960s, Higher Education was being driven as a good investment for those who wanted to be more successful and earn higher salaries, the idea of Human Capital was driven in alignment with this agenda (Sweetland, 1996). Although the theory of Human Capital emerged more prominently several decades ago, as highlighted previously, the use of the theory is still present within current Employability literature. The differences between education in the 1960s and the present day are considerable, and as a result such theoretical concepts can prove problematic. The notion that a theory emerging from the previous century that is emphasised on education, could be deemed applicable providing there has been no change within education since that time, but this is not the case. However, a good theory can stand the test of time and be revised to reflect contextual factors. Higher Education has changed dramatically over the past 20 years, including the way students are taught, the way staff teach, the way student satisfaction is measured, the metrics that ascertain success and the expansion of subject disciplines (Altbach, 2018). There are aspects of Human Capital Theory that align with the concept of Employability, such as the acquisition of knowledge, individual capability and gaining experience, which do support the varying definitions around Employability. The problem with Human Capital Theory regarding how this aligns with Employability in the current climate of Higher Education, is that it simply does not. The focus of higher education within Human Capital Theory can create a lazy approach to Employability as utilising this theory could suggest the responsibility is with the HEI. As mentioned within chapter 2, Employability is not the sole responsibility of a higher education institution, individual input and responsibility is also required by the student. More research is beginning to emerge to highlight Human Capital Theory as outdated when considering the

concept of Employability (Gillies, 2017; Marginson, 2019; Ployhart, Nyberg, Reilly and Maltarich, 2014). The emergence of this has led to other theoretical frameworks being considered for the concept of Employability.

A further notable theoretical framework that often appears within literature related to Employability is protean career theory. Unlike Human Capital Theory, the main driver of Protean Career Theory is the individual themselves (Clarke, 2012; Enache, Sallan, Simo and Fernandez, 2011; Gasteiger and Briscoe, 2007; Hall, 1976; Inkson, 2006). When comparing Human Capital and Protean Career Theory it has been suggested that there are fundamental similarities in terms of desired outcome, but the responsibility of how that occurs is the difference (Enache *et al*. 2011; Inkson, 2006). Shifting responsibility back to the individual not only releases some pressure from Higher Education Institutions, but it allows individuals to take ownership of their learning and how this can integrate and impact on career decisions and pathways. Allowing students to become responsible for their own development is one that has been advocated within research (Fitzpatrick, 2020; Noorbhai, 2020; Ullah and Wilson, 2007). However, it has also been noted that Protean Career Theory alludes to the many factors that can impact upon student learning. In relation to how Protean Career Theory is therefore utilised with Employability, there must be consideration surrounding Employability engagement which will facilitate student learning. The implementation of Protean Career Theory within an educational setting is something that has been considered beneficial for student populations (Chin and Rasdi, 2014; Cortellazzo, Bonesso, Fabrizio and Batista-Foguet, 2020). The idea of students taking control of learning is something that is reported as a success within relevant literature (Fitzpatrick, 2020; Noorbhai, 2020; Ullah and Wilson, 2007). Students tend to be more engaged when they are involved in the learning cycle, rather than being seen as a passive audience (Bryson, 2014; Buckley, 2014). The shift in responsibility towards the individual is one that is important, but there still needs to be an active role for the education provider and engagement with industry which cannot be forgotten. Encouraging students to be part of the curriculum design process creates a sense of ownership and is a positive approach to enhancing engagement and creating independent learners (Buckley, 2014). Creating a sense of independence within learning, is a step towards being proactive and engaging with the process of acquiring knowledge and applying this to practice (Bryson, 2014; Kuh and Hu, 2001).

It is documented within Employability literature that some of the challenge surrounding Employability within higher education is the commitment to the concept (Bui and Porter, 2010; Gracia, 2010; Jones, 2014). One of the main aims of this thesis is to understand how Employability is perceived through the student population, which is an important step when trying to ascertain engagement levels. Without the understanding of Employability perception, it becomes difficult to understand Employability engagement levels. The idea of commitment to the concept of Employability is not solely focussed towards only students, there is also an understanding required from staff within higher education. Perception is a significant part of this thesis, but this is from both student and staff perspective. The notion of understanding how individuals perceive and engage can relate to a theory that does emerge within Employability literature around individual engagement. Social Cognitive Theory is often cited in literature to provide an understanding of individual behaviour (Bandura, 1991; Harrison, Rainer, Hochwarter and Thompson 1997; Prussia and Kinicki, 1996; Zikic and Saks, 2009). The relevance of this alongside Employability is to recognise drivers and influences behind individual motivations and actions. Without understanding this information, there is little to learn and less chance of making differences. The main points addressed by Bandura (1986) with Social Cognitive Theory is that motives and behaviours are driven by the experiences of the individual. Bandura stated that there are 3 elements to Social Cognitive Theory, which became part of a framework known as the Triadic Reciprocal Model of Causality (Bandura, 1986). The 3 sections of this model are, 1) Personal characteristics, 2) Behaviours of others, 3) External Factors. As a concept, Employability is multifaceted and this is due to the different stakeholders involved. When applying a framework like this one, it is clear to see based on the Social Cognitive Theory, that the influence of others is impactful on the individual. A model such as this one from Bandura, provides some rationale for the importance of capturing the views and perceptions of staff within Higher Education considering their potential influence on students. The use of Social Cognitive Theory within literature is useful as it provides insight into the thought processes of individuals. Social Cognitive Theory has been used within Employability literature to assess the extent of external influence and also self-efficacy of the individual (Cai, 2013; Lent and Brown, 2006; Liu, Peng, Anser, Chong and Lin, 2020). When this is coupled with a concept such as Employability, the transferability of the theory is obvious based upon the need to understand how Employability is viewed and the factors that can influence this to ultimately

link to engagement. However, there are some researchers who mention that the way individuals think in any given moment, does not mean that is how they will always think (Super, 1981; Theun and Bru, 2009).

Super (1981) developed a theory named the Self-Concept Theory, and this was based around the idea that over time, individual perception can change. The main points behind this theory looks at the notion of both experience and time playing a part in how values and goals can change. This theoretical framework has been mentioned in some Employability literature, but not to an extensive level. For the purposes of this thesis, this framework is particularly relevant for the longitudinal nature of the research. Adopting a framework such as the one by Super, is useful to address if there are differences between perceptions captured within the early stages of data collection, compared to the latter stages that will take place once the participants have graduated, approximately 3 years after collecting the initial pieces of data. In studies that have included Self-Concept Theory, although there are clear factors that alter perception, some have argued that time and experience is a natural occurrence and therefore applying a theoretical concept to this is unnecessary (Hattie, 2014). This is a valid point to be made, but without the distinction of additional influence on perception changes, there would be no variables to consider in which direction these perceptions could change.

The use of theoretical frameworks adds justification as a way in which concepts can be understood and further developed. The concept of Employability is already difficult to fully understand, so the utilisation of a framework, can break the concept into digestible pieces of an already fuzzy puzzle. The use of theoretical frameworks within this research can add further context and value to the findings.

3.10 CONCLUSION

The concept of Employability is complex and this is well documented within literature. As a concept with multiple stakeholder involvement, it is important to gather and assess the perspectives of those stakeholders. Within this chapter it is evident that Employability cannot be clearly given one definition that will suit all stakeholders, but there is evidence that there are common patterns pertaining to individual personal development. The literature review

has highlighted a significant gap in relation to student perspective within the research field as well as student engagement amongst sport students. The research highlights that although the students are granted a voice, the point at which this is permitted is either far too late within their academic journey, or they have already converted to become a graduate. To make a change, it is critical that areas in need of development such as enhancing Employability skills, are detected as early as possible and are monitored over time. Gathering information from the students themselves will not only provide insight into a relatively neglected area of research, but it will provide opportunities for assessing how significant data gathering can be used during the student journey rather than at the end or beyond.

3.11 THE STUDENT VOICE: MY VIEWS AS A RESEARCH STUDENT

When researching the concept of Employability and gathering the literature, my thought process switched very easily to not only understanding the concept but trying to achieve something that is clearly very difficult, defining Employability. Undertaking a project at doctoral level about a concept that is heavily contested is very difficult and often leads to questions such as "where do I start?". The more I read, the more I understood that defining Employability is not possible if I am trying to reach a point of universal definition. The most I could do is review and evaluate how Employability is viewed from different perspectives to understand how this impacts on the student population. This also led to the realisation that the student population is significantly underrepresented within literature in regard to student perspective.

The literature highlights that Employability is utilised in a way that is beneficial for the active stakeholder at that time, but the problems arise when multiple stakeholders become involved at any one time which unfortunately tends to be the majority. Although this chapter was created to show the variety of perspectives surrounding the concept of Employability it has also highlighted that there are conceptualisation crossovers which is shown in Tables 4 and 5. These crossovers highlighted that there are shared conceptualisations indicating that rather than trying to achieve the impossible task of definitively defining Employability, the need to assess patterns across the multiple stakeholders could be a starting point. This

starting point is then useful to understand the underrepresented student voice in relation to the research carried out within this thesis.

Within the literature there is an alignment of who is important within the concept of Employability as highlighted within the QAA (2014) model used within Chapter 2 and literature gathered within this chapter. Amongst the muddy waters of Employability, it was refreshing to see some form of agreement embedded within the concept in relation to the key stakeholders and I was relieved to learn this and use this a solid foundation for my own research. Admittedly some of the papers that indicated a relational conceptualisation did not do so too obviously and a little more reading was required to make the links. However, what did emerge was why there was a need for relational conceptualisations in the first place.

The work by Tomlinson (2012) began to consider multiple stakeholder involvement after stating that only offering one perspective with the expectation of understanding Employability is confusing and naïve. Reflecting on my own experiences as an undergraduate student I can relate to this approach from Tomlinson as being aware of all the moving parts surrounding the concept of Employability was not really something I was taught, but in fact became aware of through experience. From the very beginning of my undergraduate journey the focus was always on careers that could derive from your course specific subject, which is not uncommon, but very little consideration or information was provided about contingency career options. As someone who left an undergraduate programme almost 15 years ago I have learnt the importance of transferrable skills within those last 15 years through numerous experiences in both a personal and professional capacity. I understand that job markets change and therefore the skills required change also but focussing on course specific career outcomes and therefore skills that could be contextualised for this gave me a blinkered approach to my options beyond graduation. As a student I was never asked my opinion on my own learning, how I felt this could be beneficial in my future career options or if I'd considered alternate job prospects. It could be argued that 15 years ago Employability was not seen as it is today, but as the evidence shows in Chapter 2, Employability has always been important and evident.

Within my personal journey from undergraduate student to research student as well as being a professional in between I have experienced numerous Employability scenarios that are not reported in literature. Some of the examples I will provide are particularly pertinent within the world of elite sport and a catch phrase that is now widely used by lecturers teaching

sport related subjects include "it's not what you know but who you know". Sadly there is truth behind this saying especially within the sport domain and even more so within elite sport. So although there is validity in this statement, in reality the message can be misconstrued when delivered to a student. I have been on both sides of this statement as both a student and a lecturer. As a student I applied a dichotomy approach and this fluctuated during my time as a student. My approach as a student swayed between these 2 contrasting statements:

"What is the point of learning new skills and enhancing my knowledge when I will be dismissed as they probably already know who they want for the position".

"If this is the case then I need to become someone that is known and develop my networking skills".

These contrasting thoughts became both a help and a hindrance during my own time as a student and it was all derived from that one statement delivered by one of my lecturers. This demonstrated to me the true power of influence of the words in which lecturers speak and the phrases shared with the student population. On reflection this statement became a really difficult concept to grasp and this was mainly due to the fact that as a female wanting to pursue a career in a very male dominated environment I already felt like I was tasked with an uphill battle, this statement made that hill a little bit steeper. Through time, experience and age I have come to realise that this statement is nothing more than an advertisement for nepotism and that just because a lecturer shares this inside knowledge does not mean they agree with it, but as stated earlier this can be misconstrued. As a lecturer I still share this as inside knowledge as it worth being aware of, but I am careful to also share that I don't agree with this being a correct way of recruitment. I encourage students to use this knowledge to create motivation within themselves and try to position themselves better so that nepotism has no place against a candidate of such high calibre that it cannot be ignored. The messages portrayed to the student population can be extremely influential and therefore must be done with care. The intention of any messages should be positive and motivating and this is something that is often reinforced through the encouragement of gaining work experiences or work placements whilst studying.

HEIs encourage students to gain additional experiences outside of their studies to promote the need for applying theory to practice and to also promote the concept of Employability as university wide agendas. The difficulties with this, much like the difficulties of defining the concept is how it is measured and therefore subsequently monitored. From a student perspective I have undertaken work placement opportunities and there has been very little regard for the quality of placement, the content whilst on placement and the assessment of personal skill development. The emphasis in my experience from a HEI perspective on work placement was purely that an opportunity has been provided, regardless of what that opportunity comprised of. I have been fortunate enough as a student to gain experience within settings in which I want to build a career, but the roles in which I undertook were nothing more than administrative duties which is a far cry away from my career aspirations, the setting was adequate, but the role was not.

The impression I may have created is that of a negative one as a student, but there are positives which were built from these experiences. My thoughts from a student perspective is that we are merely a piece of the puzzle that must click into position alongside bigger agendas, when in fact we should be the driving force. The impact of the expectation of students going along with university agendas and losing an element of control in our learning is severe when considering the ratio of HEI to student numbers which is 1:thousands. It would be naïve to say that only the student population or an individual approach should be the central point of consideration when it comes to Employability but the volume of the student/individual voice deserves to turned up to reflect them to be as the literature states; a key stakeholder.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

PART 1: RESEARCH DESIGN BACKGROUND
PART 2: Q METHODOLOGY
PART 3: THESIS RESEARCH DESIGN

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explore and justify relevant research designs appropriate for this thesis. The chapter begins with the exploration of various research designs and how this is a crucial step when conducting research. Beyond stating the choice of research paradigm for this thesis, the subsequent section entails a breakdown of Q methodology to explain why this methodology has been chosen for this research. The final section of this chapter will outline the detail and procedures for collecting and analysing the data which has been captured as part of this thesis.

PART 1: RESEARCH DESIGN BACKGROUND

4.1 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

When creating and investigating a research question, understanding how this research topic is perceived and viewed in the world will allow for a more robust approach to the investigation (Bryman, 2008). With the vast array of philosophical paradigms within research, understanding human thought processes and behaviours has become much more prominent within literature. Research suggests that the predominant paradigms of positivism and interpretivism have carved a pathway for more philosophical paradigms to emerge (Adom, Yeboah and Ankrah, 2016). Upon scrutiny of these paradigms (Figure 3), this thesis will be underpinned using an interpretivism approach.

Figure 3 - Traditional Paradigms
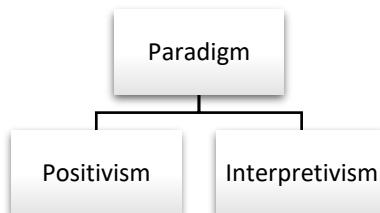
This decision was made based upon the comparisons of the ontological assumptions of both these paradigms. Taylor and Medina (2011) explain that a positivist paradigm is a scientific based approach with the intention of investigating, confirming, predicting and testing theories and/or hypotheses. On the one hand, a positivist approach is largely used in the field of natural sciences and mostly adopts a quantitative methodology with the main aim of the outcome being objective (Cresswell, 2007; Depoy and Gitlin, 1998; Taylor and Medina, 2011). Based on the literature the understanding of a positivist paradigm does not align with the purposes of this thesis and was therefore ruled out. On the other hand, the ontological assumption of interpretivism has been classified by some as the 'humanistic paradigm' with its arrival emerging from educational research in the 1970s (Cashman and Seifer, 2008; Hein, 1991). Within interpretivism, unlike positivism, it is normal practice for the researcher to immerse themselves into the environment in which they are studying. Although this approach to being immersed in the environment is not applicable for this thesis, there is more alignment between the literature on interpretivism paradigms and the purposes of this research. Traditionally interpretivist research is conducted using a qualitative approach, which is often viewed negatively by the positivist research community (Cashman and Seifer, 2008). Members of the positivist community feel that most approaches adopted using an interpretivist paradigm lacks robustness, whilst validity and reliability is questioned. However, in a paper by Guba and Lincoln (1989) they mention the creation of benchmarked standards of trustworthiness and authenticity which are different, but parallel to the reliability, validity and objectivity standards of positivism (Taylor and Medina, 2011). In relation to this thesis which has an environmental focus on Higher Education the groundings of interpretivism are well suited. In addition to this, research by Palmer (1998) used an interpretivist approach when trying to understand his own views about teaching and the many factors that can impact upon this. The work by Palmer attempts to capture subjective viewpoints within an education setting, whilst also ensuring other factors are included. Although this thesis is focussed on Employability, the work by Palmer has set out to capture subjective information within education, which falls into perfect alignment with this thesis. As a researcher the ontology of interpretivist aligned well to my own beliefs that reality is not an objective, fixed entity that can be observed and measured in a purely empirical manner, but rather is a social construct that is shaped by cultural, historical, and linguistic factors. One influential proponent of interpretivism is Max Weber, who argued that social reality is

"subjectively meaningful" and can only be understood through the interpretive understanding of those involved (Weber, 1904/1964). Another key figure is Alfred Schutz, who developed the idea of the "life-world" as the subjective, intersubjective reality that individuals inhabit and navigate (Schutz, 1962). As the researcher, an interpretivist paradigm seemed suitable for this thesis, but then I noticed how one author explains that Positivism and Interpretivism are the birth parents of philosophical offspring (Adom, Yeboah and Ankrah, 2016). This allowed me to delve deeper into whether any further paradigms stemmed from interpretivism and which may offer a much clearer alignment to this thesis. As seen in figure 4, this led me to consider constructivism as a better philosophical paradigm for this thesis.

Figure 4 - The Offspring of the Traditional Paradigms
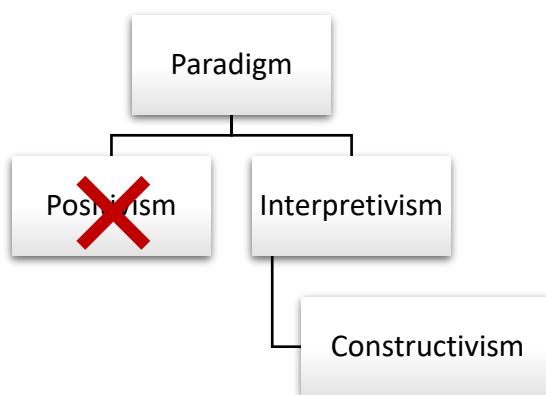
Constructivism has been described as a paradigm which asserts that individuals construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through experiences and reflection (Honebein, 1996). Kalender (2007) adds to this further by stating that a constructivist paradigm reflects that learning does not only happen via traditional teaching methods but is enhanced through the spirit of experimentation and doing. Although the main focus of this thesis is focused on Employability perspective, there is also the component of how this impacts on engagement. Adom, Yeboah and Ankrah (2016) have stated that a true constructivist will consider the idea that students involved in the teaching and learning process will be encouraged to engage and allow them to discover their own knowledge or truth. There are numerous authors widely recognised within academia who promote student engagement to enhance the teaching and learning process, including Jerome Bruner, Jean

Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey. The work of Jean Piaget is seen as pioneering in relation to the constructivism paradigm, due to his explanation of how information is processed to construct knowledge. Piaget (1945) explained that two mechanisms are at work when consuming information, one is the use of experience and two is embedding the new information alongside that experience. The idea is that by combining something old and something new, the outlook will construct something different. This explanation of constructivism alongside the epistemological assumptions of this paradigm are a nice fit for this thesis. The epistemological assumption for a constructivist paradigm is that reality needs to be interpreted and the ontological assumption is that reality is created by individuals. The subjective nature of this thesis and the literature available around the constructivist paradigm is therefore a suitable paradigm for this research.

The suitability for a constructivist paradigm is apparent and the importance of reflection highlighted by Honebein (1996) is relevant to the study type in which this thesis follows. I agree that reflection is not only an important aspect of learning but capturing information over periods of time can be insightful and informative to enhance knowledge further. This thesis has adopted both a snapshot and longitudinal approach within the studies. Snapshot data capturing is useful for obtaining instant information about that moment in time and can also be useful for contextual purposes (Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli, 2003). Due to the limited moment in which information is captured there is also an argument for a much longer process in relation to data collection. A longitudinal approach not only offers momentary information, but it can also show changes in perspective and knowledge over time and can lead to questions being asked about why these changes occurred and the influence on those changes (Khoo, West, Wu and Kwok, 2006).

To effectively use a constructivist approach within this thesis, research tools that are used by the constructivist research community need to be explored to choose the most appropriate. Due to the 'human' nature of social science research Bhattacherjee (2012) suggests that identifying research tools for data collection can equally help or hinder an entire research project. Traditionally constructivists adopt a qualitative approach to research based on the need to capture thoughts, beliefs and perspectives (Brookfield, 2000; Frodeman, 2008). Within most research referring to constructivist paradigms, the use of qualitative methods such as interviews, questionnaires, observations and focus groups are widely acknowledged as the traditional tools (Carter and Henderson, 2005). There are however

questions which usually derive from quantitative based researchers surrounding the robustness and rigour of qualitative data analysis (Watts and Stenner, 2012). As the researcher I decided to explore whether there are research tools that allow for a mixed method approach but is also accepted within the constructivist research community.

4.2 MIXED METHODS

Mixed methods research is a valuable approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies, providing researchers with a comprehensive understanding of complex research topics. By integrating both numerical data and qualitative insights, mixed methods research enhances the validity and reliability of findings through triangulation and complementarity. As Creswell and Clark (2017, p2) state, this approach enables researchers to "better answer research questions by combining different types of data, methods, and theoretical perspectives". By incorporating diverse data sources and analytical techniques, mixed methods research allows for a deeper exploration of the intricacies and nuances of a phenomenon. Additionally, the integration of quantitative and qualitative data provides a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena, as emphasized by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, p4), who describe mixed methods as a means to "capture the complexity, richness, and diversity of human experiences and social phenomena". Overall, mixed methods research offers a robust framework for generating in-depth and holistic insights into complex research inquiries.

The epistemological assumptions underlying the use of a mixed methods approach reflect a recognition that knowledge and understanding can be enhanced by combining quantitative and qualitative research traditions. Mixed methods research embraces a pragmatic worldview that emphasizes the value of both positivist and interpretivist paradigms in generating meaningful insights. It acknowledges that reality is complex and multifaceted, and that different aspects of phenomena are best captured through diverse methods and perspectives. One epistemological assumption of mixed methods research is that multiple ways of knowing contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of a research topic. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) highlight the idea of complementarity, where quantitative and qualitative methods provide distinct but complementary information. By combining the strengths of both approaches, researchers can gain a more nuanced and holistic

understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Another epistemological assumption is that mixed methods research embraces the idea of triangulation. Denzin (1978) suggests that using multiple data sources, methods, or investigators can enhance the validity of research findings. Triangulation allows researchers to cross-validate their findings by comparing and contrasting data from different sources, thereby increasing the confidence in the overall results. Lastly, mixed methods research acknowledges the importance of context and subjective meaning in understanding social phenomena. It recognizes that individuals and their experiences cannot be reduced to numbers alone. Qualitative methods provide a deeper exploration of the subjective experiences, interpretations, and meanings attached to the phenomenon, which cannot be captured solely through quantitative measures. In summary, the epistemological assumptions of using a mixed methods approach recognize the value of combining quantitative and qualitative methods to enhance knowledge and understanding. It embraces complementarity, triangulation, and the recognition of context and subjective meaning to provide a more comprehensive and robust understanding of complex research topics.

When considering that the aims of this thesis are built around understanding Employability perceptions and knowledge and how this impacts on engagement, I needed to ascertain a methodology that could capture the subjective nature of this thesis but also analyse these findings in a way to bring forward some useful meaning to this topic area.   My exploration led me to Q Methodology, as it is described by some as a mixed method, some as qualiquantological and some state it is quantitative but with a qualitative aim (Davis and Michelle, 2011; Hayne, 1998; Stenner and Rogers, 2004). My interest was piqued by the sheer contested nature of this method, but upon further scrutiny Q methodology is a perfect fit for this thesis. Q methodology offers the qualitative richness, whilst adding a quantifiable robust analysis process, and more importantly is a recognised method within the constructivist research community (Stenner and Rogers, 2004). The use of Q Methodology within the subject specific domain of Employability was non-existent when this doctoral journey began in 2013, but that is changing. Further expansion on Q methodology features in the next section of this chapter.

Based on the information evaluated within this section and the justification for thesis alignment throughout this section, a thesis paradigm has been constructed (Figure 5) which will be used within this research.

Figure 5 - Thesis Paradigm
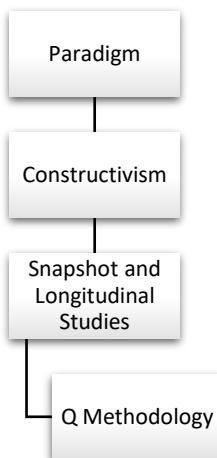
4.3 CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES IN RESEARCH

Within social science research, adopting a constructivist approach is becoming increasingly popular. It is reported by Bell (2018) that this is largely due to the belief that a constructivist approach to research can effectively enhance learning and subsequently pave the way to make positive changes. Bell (2018) reports that within Higher Education in particular, a constructivist approach is welcomed as there is evidence to show that the experimental and hands on approach within research, aids in the development of skills related to entrepreneurship and Employability. Research indicates that constructivism lends itself to active based learning, and this approach can improve fundamental skills within individuals that are transferrable such as problem solving, greater knowledge retention and an increase in motivation (Bonwell and Eison, 1991; Rhem, 1998). Bell (2018) reports that there is a strong case that constructivist approaches enhance Employability development as it promotes ownership within an individual which directly impacts on the level of personal responsibility within that person. The work by Bell adds to previous work by Busch (2009) who pleaded for the need of awareness of a constructivist approach when considering research design as a sound basis for an adequate form of enhancing individual Employability competence. A constructivist approach is appearing more predominantly within recent research but there are still other approaches adopted by those working within the field of social science (Cresswell and Clark, 2018). There are examples such as that of Decrop (1999), McAnulla

83

(2006) and Packard (2017) who have undertaken social science research from an interpretivist approach, which is not too different from a constructivist approach considering they have a shared philosophical underpinning as mentioned earlier, apart from the belief of knowledge construction within the constructivist approach. There is a resonant impression being created within many disciplines across the social sciences, that constructivism holds much more value than perhaps it has been given credit for previously. Gusango, Maani and Ssetumba (2021) suggests that utilising a constructivist paradigm opens doors that may have previously been closed, and as its popularity increases within the research community, more research tools that complement the approach will emerge.

PART 2: METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS

4.4 Q METHODOLOGY: ORIGINS

In 1935 William Stephenson introduced the idea of Q methodology for the first time whilst working within Psychology (Stephenson, 1935). The justification for a new methodology (Q) was apparent due to the difficulties Stephenson faced when trying to understand the subjectivity of the many facets of Psychology. Researching human subjectivity is something that Stephenson believed could be done better, but there was very little outside of the traditional qualitative approaches to analyse this with more rigour. Stephenson wondered whether the use of statistical analysis used within quantitative research could be adapted and adopted into a qualitative world. This knowledge enabled Stephenson's curiosity to peak about the possibility of embedding those same statistical algorithms within qualitative research, or more specifically within studies related to human subjectivity. Stephenson understood the basic statistical underpinning of factor analysis created by Spearman in the early 20th century, which allowed him to adapt the format to achieve his vision of Q methodology being recognised as a standalone research technique. Watts and Stenner

(2012) report that his awareness of R Methodology [1] which derives from correlated statistics by Karl Pearson, created in 1904, was a crucial part of the creation of Q Methodology. To understand how Q Methodology was created, it is important to explain Spearman's factor analysis and Pearson's R Methodology, as these were the foundations in which Q Methodology was built upon.

To explain the principles of Spearman's factor analysis Table 6 provides an example to highlight how data could be displayed using Spearman's factor analysis and explain the process of how analysis is conducted in this way.

Table 6 - Data matrix for Factor Analysis (Watts and Stenner, 2012, p. 8)

Persons	*Variables*			
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*
A	Ax1	Ax2	Ax3	Ax4
B	Bx1	Bx2	Bx3	Bx4
C	Cx1	Cx2	Cx3	Cx4
D	Dx1	Dx2	Dx3	Dx4

Spearman's factor analysis focusses on correlation between variables. In the example within Table 6, there are 4 variables being measured across 4 participants. Each variable within the table is representative of a test or measurement around a specific topic. As an example, variable 1 may test individual skill level, variable 2 measures memory etc. Each variable therefore merits its own value as distinct separate measurements (Denzine, 1998). When conducting Spearman's factor analysis on the data within table 6 the analysis is focussed on correlations between those variables to distinguish if there are emerging patterns across them. If patterns emerge, they are classified as a 'factor' or a 'label'. Identifying factors across variables is important to demonstrate relationships between variables that may have been deemed unconnected prior to the analysis (Dennis, 1986). Determining strong factors using correlation identifies that a positive or negative shift in one variable will also impact on the correlated variable identified through factor analysis. This approach created by Spearman is

---

[1] R Methodology: Term used to describe any methodology relating to statistical analysis

important to show the significance across multiple variables when combined, but this also led to the question surrounding the participants (Brown, 1996). Spearman's approach is focussed on variable based factor analysis, with very little established about the participants themselves. Using table 6, Spearman's factor analysis is conducted by analysing the columns of data but not the rows which represent the participants. Using only Spearman's factor analysis means that although there is a deeper understanding of variable relationships, very little has been learnt about those who provided the data (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Stephenson recognised this and so began the development of Q methodology. Rather than providing an analysis of the variables, Stephenson decided to flip this approach and convert the participants into the variables, therefore prioritising factors amongst individuals rather than the original variables themselves. The luxury of Q methodology being built on top of Spearman's factor analysis, allows for the correlation of variables to still be present whilst also capturing a much more detailed account of those providing the information (Stephenson, 1953). Stephenson believed that quantifying subjective viewpoints would allow them to be seen as numerical data, therefore making the process of statistical based analysis much easier.

Converting subjective viewpoints into numerical data, allowed for a much easier transition of analysis using the mathematical algorithms already present within R Methodology. Grounded within the traditions of Psychology, R Methodology has been used to compare individuals based upon key variables outlined by the researcher (Kline, 1994). As an example, participants may be measured against each other based on personality traits or characteristics. Although the use of R Methodology has a place, with the use of Pearson's correlation, Stephenson was not convinced that enough information was being captured about the individual participants themselves. Comparing individuals is an important aspect to build an accurate broader picture within society, but this also alludes to how this information is then useful to those individuals on a personal level (Joreskog, 1973; Kline, 1994). The points made by Stephenson surrounding both R Methodology and Spearman's factor analysis, highlighted gaps that appear to lose the voice of the participant. These findings paved the way for the introduction of Q methodology.

4.5 Q METHODOLOGY: WHAT IS IT?

Applying scientific rigour to research within the social sciences has been documented as challenging but important (Radley and Chamberlain, 2001). Qualitative data methods are the most used approach within social science research, therefore questioning the robustness when conducting analysis due to the inability to quantify the data (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Bringing Q methodology to the table allows for subjective viewpoints to be captured whilst adding a scientific analysis process to reveal the findings. In the subsequent section of this chapter a detailed breakdown of the steps involved in Q methodology are provided but for the purposes of understanding how Q methodology is perceived within the research community, it is important to highlight some information about Q methodology steps at this point. Q methodology is a tool that is used to collect and analyse data on subjective topics of interest (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Participants are provided with differing views, beliefs and understandings on a specific research topic and then asked to rank them based on their own feelings and views of the topic, participants are then individually interviewed about their selection. The researcher allocates a numerical value to each ranked item which allows for the viewpoints of the participants to be analysed statistically by way of factor analysis to determine if there are correlations (Watts and Stenner, 2012). Factor analysis allows the researcher to determine similarities and disparities across the participants to ascertain polarised perspectives on a specific topic of interest. The interviews conducted allow for context to be added to these findings to add further depth and enhance knowledge within the research community around that specific topic of interest.

Within literature, debates are present about whether Q methodology is qualitative, quantitative or a mixed method. Since Q methodology was first revealed in 1935, there have been mixed reviews with some advocating its versatility, whilst others have degraded it as misguided and possessing statistical improprieties (Ramlo, 2016). From its very creation, William Stephenson described Q as a practical new method that utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods, noticeably avoiding the use of the term 'mixed method' (Stenner, Watts and Worell, 2008). Hayne (1998) and Cross (2005) agree with the description provided by Stephenson, however they encourage the use of the term mixed methods when describing Q as they believe clarifying Q methodology as a mixed method emphasises the strengths of

using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in one method. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches seems to be continually highlighted as a strength of Q methodology but there does appear to be some reluctance in the way in which the methodology is labelled amongst researchers. Much like the description given by Akhtar-Danesh, Baumann and Cordingley (2008) have commended the use of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. They described Q methodology as qualitatively exploring subjectivity whilst using statistical analysis to provide some structure to those subjective views. Yet there are those researchers who fully embrace and openly describe Q methodology as a mixed method approach (Davis and Michelle, 2011). The hybridity of Q methodology is obvious, but the disparity appears in relation to how Q methodology should be described. Stenner and Stainton Rogers (2004) address this further by adding that labelling Q methodology as a mixed method does not justify the brilliance of the method. Describing Q methodology as a mixed method approach implies that qualitative approaches are added to quantitative approaches and vice versa, and this description suggests that they are used in parallel to each other rather than a true merge of the approaches, which is more in alignment to Q (Stenner and Rogers, 2004). Those differing views have seen Q methodology plagued with both victories and obstacles over the past 85 years. Methodological diversity is welcomed across the mixed method community, and although still debated, this allowed Q methodology to be a welcomed addition (Fischer, 2019). The continual debate surrounding the classification of Q methodology has led to discussions within literature about whether this is important and perhaps the priority is better placed on understanding what can be achieved by using Q.

For the purposes of this thesis, and the justified need to explore human subjectivity surrounding the contested concept of Employability, Q methodology is an appropriate fit. The idea of Q methodology being useful for understanding differing viewpoints, statistically analysing those viewpoints and exploring shared themes across participants is the main reason Q methodology is ideal for this thesis. Utilising a methodology such as Q, can only add value and insight into contested areas of discussion such as Employability. Q methodology will allow the voices of the stakeholders to be heard and for further understanding of human behaviours and beliefs.

The upcoming sections will outline each of the 7 steps that must be taken when conducting research using Q Methodology. Those 7 steps are:

1. Concourse

2. Q Set

3. P Set

4. Q Sort

5. Post Sorting Interview

6. Analysing the Data

7. Interpreting the Data

For the purposes of ease and fluidity, some of the 7 steps have been combined in the upcoming sections to assist in the explanation of the Q Methodology process.

4.5.1 CONCOURSE AND Q SET

Within Q methodology the use of the word concourse refers to the gathering of applicable information that will be used to formulate the Q set, which will be discussed later in this section. Paige and Morin (2016) describe the concourse as a population of statements on the phenomenon of interest. The concourse is a way of demonstrating what literature and knowledge is already known of a topic or subject and this can be information gathered from interviews, focus groups, academic literature or expert opinions. The construction of a concourse can take many forms including pictures, statements or audio for example (McKeown, Hinks, Stowell-Smith, Mercer & Forster, 1999). An extensive concourse can have advantages and disadvantages. An advantage of an extensive concourse is that all information regarding a specific topic is available for the researcher to deduct during the Q set stage. In contrast, a disadvantage of an extensive concourse, is that too much information can hinder the deductive process and could lead to an overpopulated Q set.   An efficient concourse should capture all the relevant aspects of the topic discourses to provide the researcher the opportunity to adopt a reductionist technique in preparation for conducting research (Stephenson, 1953). The topic area can dictate the volume of the concourse, but

research by Watts and Stenner (2005; 2012) suggest that 40-80 statements are within the normal range of statements that can be presented to participants in the Q set, although the subject matter can increase or decrease this number. The Q set is the outcome of a deductive process of statements from the concourse. The process of formulating a relevant Q set is that it allows for a narrowing of statements to be presented to the participants and alleviates any potential repeat statements found within literature. Q sets create a much more narrowed and focussed approach to the research for the results to be more detailed and specific when moving onto the analysis phase of Q methodology (Watts and Stenner, 2005). Du Plessis (2019) states that typically, a Q set is formulated by implementing either a structured or unstructured approach. An unstructured approach is choosing statements relevant to the topic with no deliberate attempt to ensure all sub issues are covered. The idea behind an unstructured approach is to offer the reality of what is occurring within this topic area (Du Plessis, 2019). A structured approach offers a more systematic method to the selection process by categorising the statements by connection and similarity, therefore ensuring all sub issues are covered by the statements on offer (Du Plessis, 2019). Due to the subjective nature of Employability, an unstructured approach was adopted when compiling the Q set for this thesis as the reality of how this topic is perceived was pivotal when conducting this research.

In relation to this thesis the concourse was devised based upon multiple definitions of Employability that are widely accessible within literature. There are core statements that appear to be dominate within Employability literature, with slight changes and additions in more recent research (Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne, 2017; Tymon, 2013; Matherly and Tillman, 2015; Williams, et al, 2015). Within the literature only 20 differing statements about Employability were apparent, with some being short and concise whilst others gave more detail. Due to the amount of information within some statements it was decided that providing lengthy statements to participants is forcing them to rank statements with the belief that they agree with the entirety of the statement provided to them. It was therefore decided that the statements would be broken down to allow much more flexibility and validity when participants were completing the Q sort. Traditional definitions surrounding Q Methodology in relation to Q sets recommend a deductive approach, but within this thesis this was somewhat problematic due to limited variations of Employability definitions within literature (20 non duplicated definitions). The suggestion by Watts and Stenner (2005; 2012)

of presenting the participants with 40-80 statements was therefore a difficult task based on only 20 variations of Employability definitions within literature. Some of those definitions were extensive and therefore had different elements of definition embedded within the one statement, so although a reductionist approach was adopted to remove the original statement duplications to formulate a Q set, a different approach was then required to create the benchmark number of statements to finalise a completed Q set. There is no mention within literature against this approach and including only the 20 original statements would be against the recommended number of statements outlined by those highly respected within the Q community. It was therefore decided that of the 20 original statements these would be further broken down to generate additional statements for the participants and therefore meeting the recommended Q set benchmark as 59 statements emerged. Appendix A highlights the 20 original statements and how each statement was further divided into smaller statements for the Q set. The sole purpose of the Q set is to offer an accurate representation of the concourse on that subject matter. The Q set formulated for this thesis did not only fulfil this purpose but it actually offered more opportunity for participants to dissect Employability definitions that are widely accepted within literature.

The findings to formulate the concourse and how this was subsequently used to formulate the Q Set can be found in Appendix B and C.

4.5.2 P SET

P set selection refers to the participants involved within the research (Watts and Stenner, 2015). Brown (1980) states that a good P set must always be more theoretical or dimensional rather than random or accidental. Implementing a purposeful approach to participant recruitment ensures an appropriate viewpoint from those directly involved with the subject matter (Watts and Stenner, 2015). A strategic approach to participant recruitment is one that is actively encouraged and common amongst Q methodologists. Regarding participant numbers, unlike R methodology that has a limited number of variables but expects a high volume of participants, Q methodologists take a different approach. It is reported that large participant numbers are not needed to sustain a good Q methodological study, but there are some guidelines which are useful (Watts and Stenner, 2012). There are some who suggest

that a ratio component is applied to the number of participants required based on the number of items in a Q set, as an example if there is a 30 item Q set, the participant number should not exceed 15. A paper by Watts and Stenner (2005) conducted a study comprising of a 60 item Q set, completed by 50 participants and this yielded significant results. They reported an awareness of some research papers being rejected based on too many participants, and on this basis have recommended that participant numbers should not exceed the number of items in a Q set. However, Stainton Rogers (1995) recommends between 40-60 participants as adequate for a Q study. There is clear debate on the most appropriate number of participants to be used within a Q study and perhaps the most appropriate will be determined by the researcher whilst trying to remain within the guidance of some of the points made above. Considering that participants become variables within Q studies, does mean that this is a significant part of the recruitment strategy and the implications for analysis must be considered. Unlike R methodology with static variables, recruiting appropriate participants and how many is pertinent within Q methodology as they are the pivotal variable within the analysis. The selection process for the participants (P set) chosen for this research is outlined in the upcoming sections 4.7.2 and 4.8.2.

4.5.3 Q SORT

In Q methodology a Q sort is the way in which participants rank the statements they have been presented with (Q set). Each item is randomly numbered which will serve no meaning to the participant as these are numerical values that are only useful to the researcher at the analysis stage. At the beginning of the study, participants will be provided with some simple instructions about the research question that will highlight the purpose of capturing their viewpoints around this question, with further explanation of the Q sort template. According to Du Plessis (2019) when participants are faced with a large Q set it is advantageous for the researcher to recommend to the participants to initially sort the statements into 3 groups of most agree, least agree and neither agree nor disagree (Du Plessis, 2019). The way a Q sort looks will be determined by the number of statements and how decisive the researcher wants

the participants to be (Du Plessis, 2019). For example, figures 6 and 7 show a Q sort template what would be used by a participant to rank statements. Each template allows for 47 statements to be ranked (blue boxes) but the overall structure for each figure is slightly different. Figure 6 is expecting the participant to be more decisive by only allowing one statement to feature at each side of the template and offering a steeper curve of distribution from the extreme ends of the template. Figure 7 however is allowing the participant to have more than one dominant viewpoint by allowing 2 spaces at each side of the template and offering a gradual distribution across the template.

Figure 6 - Q sort template (1)   **Figure 7 - Q sort template (2)**
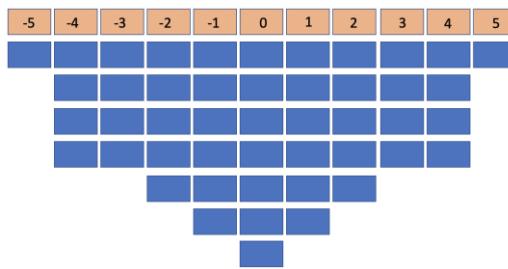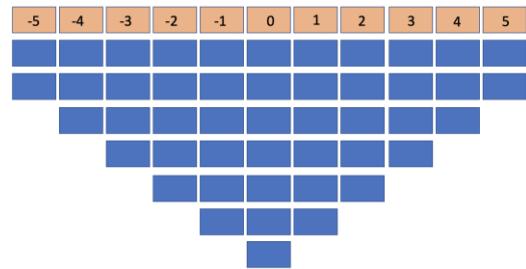
When designing the Q sort template, it was suggested that the structure needed to be weighted proportionately to show an even distribution across statement rankings (Stephenson, 1989). This however is contested by Watts and Stenner (2012) who state that the choice of distribution is irrelevant to the factors that emerge from a particular study as it is the pattern within the distribution that counts. The Q sort template used within this thesis was constructed following the suggestion of McKeown and Thomas (1988) who state that statement distribution should offer a symmetrical approach for the participant. Considering that the Q set used within this thesis consisted of 59 statements and that a forced choice distribution was implemented, the only plausible Q sort template arrangement to offer a symmetrical approach can be seen in figure 8.

Figure 8 - Q Sort Template: This Thesis

Most Disagree   Most Agree

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
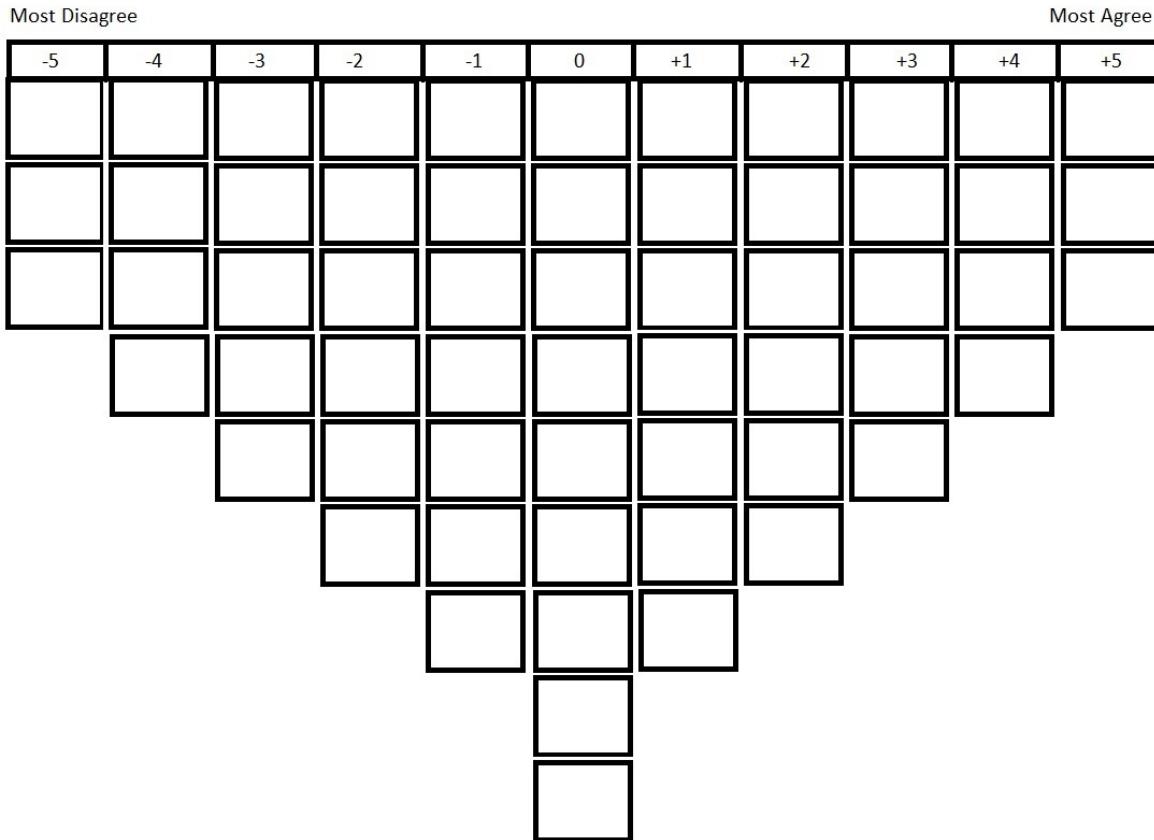
4.5.4 POST SORTING INTERVIEW

To enhance the richness and quality of the data collected via the Q sort, a post sort interview can provide further explanation and understanding about a participants Q sort choice of ranking. As mentioned, the purpose of the interview is to capture information to add quality, but for this to be efficient, the interview is required to take place as close to the completion of the Q sort as possible. Interviewing participants directly after the Q sort ranking, allows for the reasoning of order to be fresh in the mind of the participant and provide as accurate information as possible (Du Plessis, 2019). There is no clear script in relation to how this interview is to be conducted, but Watts and Stenner (2012) suggest that questions initially focus on the extreme Q sort rankings. The interview can then continue to look for obscurities

within the ranking that require further elaboration, as well as anything that is deemed particularly pertinent to the participant themselves. In the development of Q Methodology, Stephenson did not originally design the method to include interviews, but within the evolution of Q Methodology complimentary interviews were found to add context and value to the Q sort data collected. It has been suggested that using Q Methodology without post sort interviews is merely pushing Q Methodology closer to a Quantitative approach with the risk of losing the Qualitative nature of the method (Paige and Morin (2016).

4.5.5 ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING THE DATA

Analysing the data collected using Q Methodology can be conducted in a couple of ways, manually or via a software programme. Both methods use the same algorithms therefore there is no reason to choose one over the other apart from convenience for the researcher. Manual data analysis for Q Methodology was used at the beginning of its creation, but advancements and further understanding led to the creation of PQMethod. PQMethod is a software package used by Q Methodologists created by Peter Schmolck in the early 1990s. The software is a free application and can be used across multiple OS platforms. To run the analysis, the researcher must first input the information relating to the Q Sort Template distribution as this will allow the software to analyse which statements have been allocated under which column within the Q Sort. The next step is to then manually input all the completed Q Sorts using the numbers that have been allocated to each statement, this essentially builds a statistical version of a Q Sort showing the different rankings of statements 1-59 from each participant. Once the data has been inputted into the software, the analysis can begin. Unfortunately, amongst Q methodologists there is no one definitive way of running the analysis. There are some general guidelines to follow but there are also some choices to be made by the researcher based upon the context of the study. Factor analysis is conducted at this stage as a data reduction technique to identify patterns of similarities across the data. Detected patterns are presented as a collective and classified as a 'factor'. Upon the identification of factors, it is then at the discretion of the researcher to understand the common patterns amongst the components within each factor, to offer a suitable 'factor

label' to summarise that specific factor. Appendix D demonstrates an inputted completed Q Sort within the PQMethod software package.

4.6 Q METHODOLOGY: IN LITERATURE

Q methodology has been widely used within research covering psychological and behavioural perspectives. The research disciplines are vast and cover examples from views on farming, to testing the self-perceived skills of nurses (Danesh, Baumann and Cordingley, 2008; Kubler and Forbes, 2005; Paige and Morin, 2016; Phelan, 2014). The array of research areas that have utilised Q methodology shows the versatility of the method and how it can be applied to most if not all disciplines in some way.

In relation to the purpose of this thesis there are research examples available that utilise Q methodology and sport. The difference, however, is most of these research articles are looking at sport from a recreational or participatory perspective, rather than analysing the views of those who study sport. Q methodology has been used quite frequently in studies surrounding sport participation, including studies by Grix (2010) and Keshtidar, Shaji, Roohi and Fatemizadeh (2018). These authors utilised Q Methodology in their studies with a focus on sport but this did not include any participants for those studying sport.

Regarding Q Methodology being used within Employability studies, this is much more popular across literature. As Q-Methodology has strong links to Psychology, it is not surprising to find articles utilising Q Methodology when it comes to understanding the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of people. A study that was conducted that shares some similarities to this thesis used Q Methodology to ascertain the views of different stakeholder groups to see how they fit together. Speight, Lackovic and Cooker (2013) stated that participants were given a Q Set that consisted of 39 statements covering general comments related to Employability. The authors reported that the use of Q Methodology in their study allowed them to cluster the way in which the participants thought and therefore created multiple shared viewpoints. The reason why Q Methodology is chosen seems to be based on whether subjective viewpoints need to be captured. This reasoning adds to the justification for this thesis and why Q Methodology seems a logical tool for use.

4.7 INTERVIEW TYPES

In order to capture the journey of each participant within study 3 and understand how these journeys have impacted on their engagement with Employability throughout their studies, there is a need to consider how this data will be captured. Due to the need to capture the experiences of each individual a decision was made to avoid a group setting such as focus groups as this could deviate from the richness of data required. Therefore, exploring the possibility of interviews was a consideration.

Interviews are a widely used research method in various academic disciplines, allowing researchers to gather valuable qualitative data (Marshall and Rossman, 2014; Patton, 2002; Rubin and Rubin, 2012). This comparative analysis examines three different methods of conducting interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Each method possesses distinct characteristics that influence the data collection process, participant engagement, and the types of insights obtained. By exploring the advantages and limitations of each approach, researchers can make informed decisions regarding the selection of interview methods for their studies (Fontana and Frey, 2018).

Structured interviews employ a predetermined set of standardized questions, typically administered in a fixed order to all participants. This method ensures consistency across interviews, making it suitable for studies with large sample sizes or when comparing responses quantitatively. Structured interviews facilitate easy data analysis and interpretation, as responses can be easily categorized and quantified (Fontana and Frey, 2018). However, structured interviews limit participants' freedom to elaborate on their responses or introduce new topics, potentially resulting in shallow insights and missing nuanced perspectives (Kvale, 1996; Marshall and Rossman, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews strike a balance between structure and flexibility. Researchers use a pre-determined interview guide consisting of key questions or topics but have the freedom to explore additional areas of interest or probe further based on participants' responses. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, motivations, and perceptions, generating rich qualitative data (Bryman, 2016). Semi-structured interviews provide room for participants to share their stories, ensuring a more comprehensive exploration of the research topic. However, the analysis process can be

time-consuming and subjective due to the varying levels of probing and deviation from the interview guide (Bryman, 2016).

Unstructured interviews offer the greatest level of flexibility and freedom for both researchers and participants. This method relies on open-ended questions and encourages participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in their own words. Unstructured interviews are particularly useful when exploring new or under-researched areas, as they allow for the emergence of novel themes and unexpected insights (Liamputtong, 2013). However, the lack of structure can pose challenges during analysis, as data may be voluminous and difficult to categorize. Additionally, unstructured interviews require skilled researchers to facilitate meaningful conversations and maintain focus on the research topic (Liamputtong, 2013).

The selection of interview methods should be based on the research objectives, context, and available resources. Structured interviews are suitable for studies requiring standardized data collection and comparisons across a large sample size (Babbie, 2016; Cresswell, 2013; Trochim and Donnelly, 2008). Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between structure and flexibility, enabling in-depth exploration while maintaining some level of standardization. Unstructured interviews are ideal for exploratory research or when investigating complex and nuanced phenomena (Babbie, 2016; Cresswell, 2013; Trochim and Donnelly, 2008). The choice of interview method significantly influences the data collection process and the depth of insights gained in qualitative research. Structured interviews ensure consistency and ease of analysis, while semi-structured interviews strike a balance between structure and flexibility, generating rich qualitative data. Unstructured interviews offer the greatest freedom for participants to share their experiences but pose challenges during analysis. Cresswell (2013) states researchers should carefully consider their research objectives, the nature of the research topic, and available resources to select the most appropriate interview method. A thoughtful and informed approach to choosing interview methods enhances the validity and richness of qualitative data, contributing to the advancement of knowledge in various academic disciplines. Based on the 3 types of interview it was decided that a semi structured interview would work well for this thesis due to the flexibility of how questions are answered but also with some direction of the narrative from me as the researcher.

4.8 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured interviews are a widely used research method in various academic disciplines, including social sciences, psychology, and education (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2013). This part of the thesis explores the applications and benefits of semi-structured interviews, emphasizing their flexibility, reliability, and capacity to generate rich qualitative data. By providing a balance between structured and unstructured approaches, semi-structured interviews offer researchers an effective means to delve into participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights, whilst drawing upon relevant literature to present a comprehensive analysis of the use of semi-structured interviews in academic research. One of the key advantages of semi-structured interviews is their flexibility. Unlike structured interviews, which employ predetermined sets of questions, semi-structured interviews allow for adaptability during the data collection process. Researchers can modify and refine their interview guides based on emerging themes or unexpected responses, enabling a more nuanced exploration of the research topic (Bryman, 2016). This flexibility facilitates a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives, allowing researchers to uncover hidden aspects and gain new insights. Semi-structured interviews also offer a level of reliability while maintaining a degree of flexibility. By employing a semi-standardized interview guide, researchers ensure that key topics and questions are addressed consistently across interviews. This enhances the reliability of the data collected as it enables comparability and systematic analysis (Liamputtong, 2013). Furthermore, the use of a semi-structured format enables researchers to standardize certain elements, such as probes and prompts, while maintaining room for participants to express their unique perspectives. The qualitative nature of semi-structured interviews allows for the collection of rich and in-depth data. Participants are encouraged to elaborate on their responses, share personal experiences, and provide context, leading to a comprehensive understanding of their thoughts and behaviours. Unlike closed-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews foster a dynamic and interactive environment, enabling researchers to probe for additional information, clarify responses, and explore complex themes (Fontana & Frey, 2018). This dynamic nature of semi-structured interviews facilitates the exploration of participants' lived experiences, motivations, and underlying factors that shape their perspectives. Semi-structured interviews promote participant engagement and empowerment throughout the

research process (Fontana & Frey, 2018). By allowing participants to express their views and share their stories, semi-structured interviews create a sense of collaboration and partnership between the researcher and the participant. This participatory approach contributes to the validity and authenticity of the data collected, as participants feel valued and acknowledged (Denscombe, 2014). Additionally, semi-structured interviews empower participants by giving them the agency to shape the conversation, choose relevant topics, and highlight issues that matter most to them. Semi-structured interviews serve as a valuable research tool, providing researchers with a flexible and adaptable approach to gather rich qualitative data (Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2013). The ability to strike a balance between structure and flexibility allows for a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights. By promoting participant engagement and empowerment, semi-structured interviews foster a collaborative research environment that enhances the validity and authenticity of the findings. Researchers across various academic disciplines can leverage the advantages of semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into complex phenomena and contribute to the existing body of knowledge (Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2013).

PART 3: THESIS RESEARCH DESIGN

4.9 RESEARCH DESIGN INTRODUCTION

This thesis comprises of 3 separate studies to try and ascertain enriched information surrounding the perspective of Employability amongst undergraduate sports students and the impact this has on their engagement. The following sections will detail the process and procedures involved within each study.

For each study ethical clearance was granted by The University of Central Lancashire (Appendix E). Each participant in all 3 studies were provided with an information sheet which explained the study along with information related to withdrawal (Appendix F). Consent forms were also obtained from those who took part in the study (Appendix G).

Each study was conducted using Q methodology with a Q sort template consisting of a + 5 to – 5 distribution. Each participant was then given a Q set consisting of 59 statements. For each study the same Q sort template design was used, and the 59 statements remained the same throughout.

4.10 STUDY 1 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.10.1 STUDY 1 OVERVIEW: STAFF PERCEPTION OF EMPLOYABILITY

The purpose of this study was to capture the perception of Employability from those who interact with students and have potential influence towards the way students learn and perceive the subject area. Gathering information from staff will allow deeper understanding of not only staff views but how this could also explain the views of students. Staff understanding and perception can also provide additional information on the way a subject such as Employability is delivered and how this can impact on the engagement levels of students. To gain further understanding of Employability perceptions, two universities were chosen to be part of this study to provide an initial snapshot of comparison, rather than only capturing information from one university. Q Methodology was the only method used within this study.

4.10.2 STUDY 1: PARTICIPANTS AND RECRUITMENT

Participants for this study were carefully selected based on their role within sport university departments. Two Universities were chosen to be part of this study, 1 based in the northwest of England and 1 in the midlands. The university in the northwest is one that I as the researcher have links with as a former and current student as well as being employed there for 6 years after completing my undergraduate degree programme. These connections proved crucial in ensuring I was able to maintain relationships with staff and students throughout the duration of this thesis. The university based in the midlands was intended to

provide a comparison to the information collected against the northwest university and was selected based on the connections between my then supervisor and staff members within the midlands university. Table 7 shows the number of participants from each institution, demographic information, and the roles in which they were deemed appropriate for this research study.

Table 7 - Participant Information (Study 1)

		University 1 (NW)	University 2 (Midlands)
	No of Participants	11	5
	Gender Split	2 Females and 9 Males	3 Females and 2 Males
Roles	**Teaches on Employability related modules**	5	2
	Course Leader	4	3
	Student Experience Lead	1	-
	Placement Lead	1	-

4.10.3 STUDY 1: MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

Step 1: Participants were given a blank Q Sort template in which they were advised to place on a flat surface in preparation for the placement of each Q set statement.

Step 2: Each participant was given a pack of Q set statements (59 statements). The order in which the Q set statements were given was random, but every participant had the same 59 statements.

Step 3: Information was given to the participants relating to the purpose of the research and how this could be helpful when contextualising the statements. For example it was useful for the participants to imagine that at the beginning of each statement the phrase "Employability

is" would remind them that the purpose of the research was to capture their perspective on the concept of Employability.

Step 4: Due to the number of statements provided, participants were advised to organise the 59 statements into 3 piles. Each pile would represent statements that the participant strongly agreed with, strongly disagreed with and a neutral pile of statements in which the participant did not strongly agree nor disagree with.

Step 5: Participants were then given an hour to complete the task as this was deemed enough time for completion, but in this study all participants finished between 30-40 minutes into the Q Sort activity.

Step 6: Each participant was then invited into an immediate follow up interview to discuss their Q Sort structures. The interview was unstructured, audio recorded and conducted in a 1:1 environment and therefore removing the influence of other participants. Emphasis was placed on questions relating to the statements allocated on the extremes of the Q Sort, e.g. -5 and +5. The answers received then dictated further scrutiny of other statements placed across the Q sort. Questions were then asked relating to the statements allocated to the neutral (0) column to add further understanding to the choices made by each participant.

Step 7: A photograph was taken of each participant Q Sort to then run this data through the PQMethod software, ready for analysis.

4.11 STUDY 2 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.11.1 STUDY 2 OVERVIEW: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYABVILITY

The purpose of this study is similar to that of study 1 with the main difference being a change in participants. Within this study the aim was the capture the perspective of Employability from undergraduate sport students. This study is student focused and is therefore pertinent

to this research based on the aims of this thesis.   Gathering information from students will allow deeper understanding of how they perceive Employability during their undergraduate journey.   Gathering information relating to student perception will assist in understanding student engagement with the concept of Employability and how the concept is viewed amongst each participant. As with study 1 to gain further understanding of Employability perceptions, 2 universities were chosen to be part of this study to provide an initial snapshot of comparison, rather than only capturing information from one university. Q Methodology was the only method used within this study.

4.11.2 STUDY 2: PARTICPANTS AND RECRUITMENT

The participants within this study were carefully selected based on their programme and year of study. All participants within this study were 1st year undergraduate students (level 4) studying a sport related programme. The university programmes in which the participants were recruited varied from Sports Coaching to Sports Science, the full list of courses can be seen in table 8. The purpose of capturing data from multiple student cohorts was to assess the variations in perceptions of Employability. Some of the programmes chosen embedded Employability related content within course specific modules, whilst others had standalone Employability-based modules within the programme. Capturing student perspectives on Employability whilst also being aware of the differences in how Employability is delivered across each programme is crucial for contextualising the information gathered. As with study 1, the participants in this study were selected from the same institutions as the staff within study 1. As in study 1 the inclusion of 2 universities within this study is to create a snapshot and comparison of immediate perceptions of Employability upon entering university.

Table 8 - Participant Information (Study 2)

		University 1 (NW)	University 2 (Midlands)
	No of Participants	34	14
	Gender Split	11 Females and 23 Males	3 Females and 11 Males
	Sports Coaching	14 (S)	9 (E)
	Sports Coaching and Development	10 (S)	5 (E)
Programmes	Sports Management	2 (E)	-
	Sport Studies	2 (S)	-
	Sports Science	6 (E)	-

 * E = Employability Embedded within Core Specific Modules on this programme
 * S = Standalone Employability Modules on this programme

4.11.3 STUDY 2: MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

The same materials and procedure were followed as in Study 1 (Section 4.7.3).

4.12 STUDY 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.12.1 STUDY 3 OVERVIEW: GRADUATE PERCEPTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH EMPLOYABILITY

Study 3 was conducted 3 years after the previous studies with the intention to capture fresh data beyond the students' educational journey at University. The purpose of this study was to assess whether the perceptions of those within study 2 (northwest university students only) changed or remained stable in relation to their views on Employability as they progressed through their university programme. The beauty of completing this study beyond graduation was that the participants could reflect on the impact of Employability within

Higher Education in relation to their current position, but also to assess their levels of engagement with the concept of Employability throughout their university experience. Q Methodology was used within this study once again, but with the addition of a semi structured interview to replace the immediate interview which took place within the previous studies.

4.12.2 STUDY 3: PARTICIPANTS AND RECRUITMENT

The participants from the Northwest University within study 2 were invited to be part of this study. Due to the connections and relationships built with this university in particular, the plan for this research was always to conduct a longitudinal approach with these students as tracking them throughout their education was more likely. These participants were informed of this approach during study 2, with consent given by all who took part, but as a significant amount of time passed, I had to reach out to each participant again via email to refresh their memory of being part of study 2 and ask if they would be interested in taking part in the final study. As expected, due to the amount of time passing the number of participants for this final study reduced significantly, but still with a good representation rate for each programme. The details relating to participant numbers and which programme they graduated from can be found in table 9.

Table 9 - Participant Information (Study 3)

		Northwest University
	No of Participants	8
	Gender Split	2 Females and 6 Males
Programmes		
	Sports Coaching	3
	Sports Coaching and Development	2
	Sports Management	1
	Sport Studies	1
	Sports Science	1

4.12.3 STUDY 3: MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

Due to the nature of this study, the procedure was slightly different than the previous studies in this thesis. This study encompassed 3 phases:

1. **Complete a Q Sort**
2. **Compare the Q Sort to the one from Study 2**
3. **Semi Structured Interview**

Phase 1: Complete a Q Sort

The same materials and procedure were followed as in Study 1 and Study 2 (Section 4.7.3 and 4.8.3)

Phase 2: Compare the Q Sort to the one from Study 2

Upon completion of the newly created Q Sort, participants were presented with a picture of the Q Sort from 3 years ago (Study 2). Participants were given time to digest both Q Sorts in preparation for the final phase of this study; semi structured interview. During this time no words were exchanged between researcher and participant. Participants were allocated approximately 20 minutes to compare the Q Sorts along with a refreshment break.

Phase 3: Semi Structured Interviews

The interview conducted began like the interviews within the previous studies, asking the participant to explain the statements that were placed at the extremes of the newly formed Q Sort template, before moving onto questions about the 0 column. In preparation for these interviews set questions were asked of the participant to expand on the differences across

the 2 Q Sorts. The answers to these questions led to unscripted prompts which helped with the flow of conversation. Moving back to the script, participants were then asked specific questions relating to engagement levels throughout their time at university before moving onto asking them how or if they feel their experience with the concept of Employability throughout their university experience has played its part in their current situation. A copy of the script used in the interviews can be found in Appendix H.

When analysing the interviews, considerations were given to widely accepted and recognised methods and tools within the qualitative community as well as consideration for the number of participants included within this study. To conduct the analysis of this element of study 3, coding software such as NVivo, MAXQDA and ATLAS.ti (Bazeley, 2007; Flick, 2014) was considered, but due to the number of participants being relatively low, utilising these tools seemed not only time consuming but also over complicated. To maintain the richness in the data, a decision was made to keep the analysis a simple, clean process and this aligned well to the simplistic use of manual colour coding within a word processor. Adopting this simplistic way of analysing interviews is widely accepted within the qualitative community as stated in the work of Richards (2015) and Saldana (2015). If the sample size within study 3 was larger, there would be more consideration given to implement a coding tool to ensure that all emergent patterns are detected but considering the sample size within study 3 consists of 8 participants a decision was made to adopt a manual word processing method of analysing the data.

4.13 FRAMEWORK FOR THESIS

Based on the methodological approach discussed in this section and in alignment with the rationale of this thesis, Figure 9 highlights the framework that will be utilised for this thesis.

Figure 9 - Framework for this research
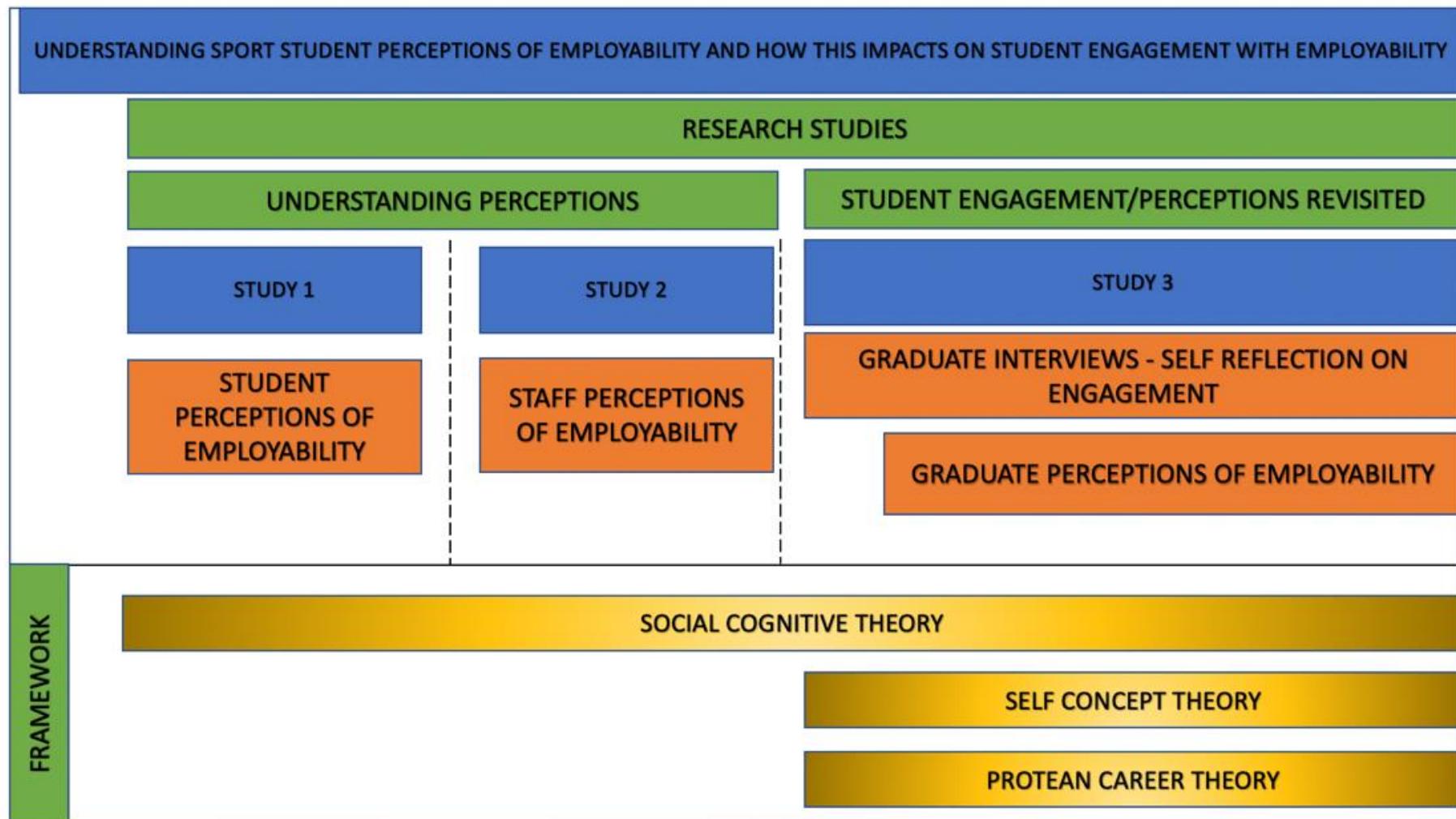
CHAPTER 5: STUDY 1 FINDINGS

(STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY)

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to develop an understanding of what Employability means to undergraduate sport students and assess how this may impact their engagement with Employability. This chapter, therefore, aims to reveal the Employability perceptions of those who play an influential role on students during their university experience; staff across higher education institutions. As mentioned within chapter 1 of this thesis, there are several objectives that need to be met to achieve the overall aim, this chapter will address objective 3:

- **Identify if there is a shared understanding and perception of Employability within and amongst relevant Higher Education Teaching Staff within Sport**

As mentioned within Chapter 4, Q methodology has been chosen for this study due to the subjective nature of the topic and the way in which Q methodology is a perfect tool to add a quantifiable element and to assist with the ease of interpretation. The preceding chapter has explored the intricacies of Q and therefore simple regurgitation is not required here, however identifying what information is useful from Q output data is necessary to add value and further understanding of how the data has been interpreted.

Upon the successful completion of running factor analysis within Q methodology the information presented is vast and somewhat overwhelming (Appendix I). To extract the most useful elements of the data produced in line with this thesis the suggestion by Damio (2018) has been implemented. Damio (2018) suggests that the data extraction should be simple and remain focussed on trying to address the research aims by identifying (1) how many types of people are there? (number of factors), (2) which people belong to each type (factor loading significance), (3) are there similarities between these types of people (factor score correlation) and (4) how are these types of people defined (distinguishing factor statements). Utilising these 4 steps when extracting data will not only ensure that there is a constant focus on the purposes of this research, but it will also simplify the way in which the research objective (objective 3) is achieved. As stated within chapter 4, factor analysis is only one part of interpreting the findings within Q methodology, and to capture the depth of perception and beliefs, a more holistic approach is required. Stainton Rogers (1995) states

that whilst it is crucial to maintain focus of the constructors (participants) it is the role of the researcher to focus on the constructions themselves. To facilitate this understanding, participant commentary is encouraged to add more value to interpreting individual perceptions to accompany the way in which the constructors have built their Q-sort. Watts and Stenner (2012) advocate the need for elaboration from each participant for their completed constructed Q-sort in the form of qualitative commentary. The remainder of this chapter will disclose and interpret the findings from this study to identify if there is a shared understanding and perception of Employability within and amongst relevant Higher Education Teaching Staff within Sport.

5.1 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND RATIONALE

The 16 participants chosen for this study were selected from 2 UK higher education institutions (HEI). 1 institution based in the Northwest of England, n = 11 with the other in the Midlands, n = 5. Table 10 provides information relating to the chosen participants, with figure 10 highlighting the demographic split across the participants within this study.

During the data collection phase of this thesis, I was a member of staff at the institution based in the Northwest, meaning that access to appropriate participants within the institution was not a problem. As the purpose of this study was to add context and further understanding to the main aim of this thesis, no significant ethical issues were present. Consideration was given to my relationship with the staff members due to being colleagues, but as stated, the main aim of this thesis is student focussed and therefore not posing a problem.

The university located in the Midlands was chosen based on a good relationship that had been built between a former supervisory team member and members of staff within the university located in the Midlands. The interactions between myself and the lead member of staff was continuous, and I found that there was a proactive nature to being involved in the study, due to their own requirements to enhance Employability practice.

Participant selection was derived from their roles and responsibilities in relation to Employability within the sport department across both institutions. The rationale behind this

was based on the likelihood of their interactions with students in relation to Employability, as deeper understanding of perceptions across staff in Employability specific roles can lead to understanding how these perceptions may impact on students.

Once the appropriate staff had been identified across both institutions, an email containing a participant information sheet and consent form was distributed to all applicable participants (Appendix F and G). This email was sent merely to inform the participant about the purpose of the study and ensure that they were comfortable to take part and at ease with the conditions set in the consent form. Participants were advised that these documents would be given to them as hard copies prior to data collection to ensure that I had a hard copy of their consent to take part in study 1.

Table 10 - Study 1 Participants

Participant Identifier	HEI (NW=North West, Mid = Midlands)	Job Role	Gender	Age Bracket A=21-29, B=30-39, C=40-49, D=50-59, E=60+	No of years teaching experience A=1-3 years, B=4-10 years, C=11-19 years, D=20+ Years
staff1	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	A	A
staff2	NW	Course Leader	M	D	A
staff3	NW	Student Experience Lead	F	D	C
staff4	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	C	B
staff5	NW	Course Leader	M	C	D
staff6	NW	Placement Lead	F	C	C
staff7	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	A	A
staff8	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	C	B
staff9	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	C	C
staff10	NW	Course Leader	M	C	D
staff11	NW	Course Leader	M	C	D
staffa	Mid	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	C	C
staffb	Mid	Course Leader	F	C	C
staffc	Mid	Course Leader	F	C	C
staffd	Mid	Course Leader	F	B	B
staffe	Mid	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	A	A
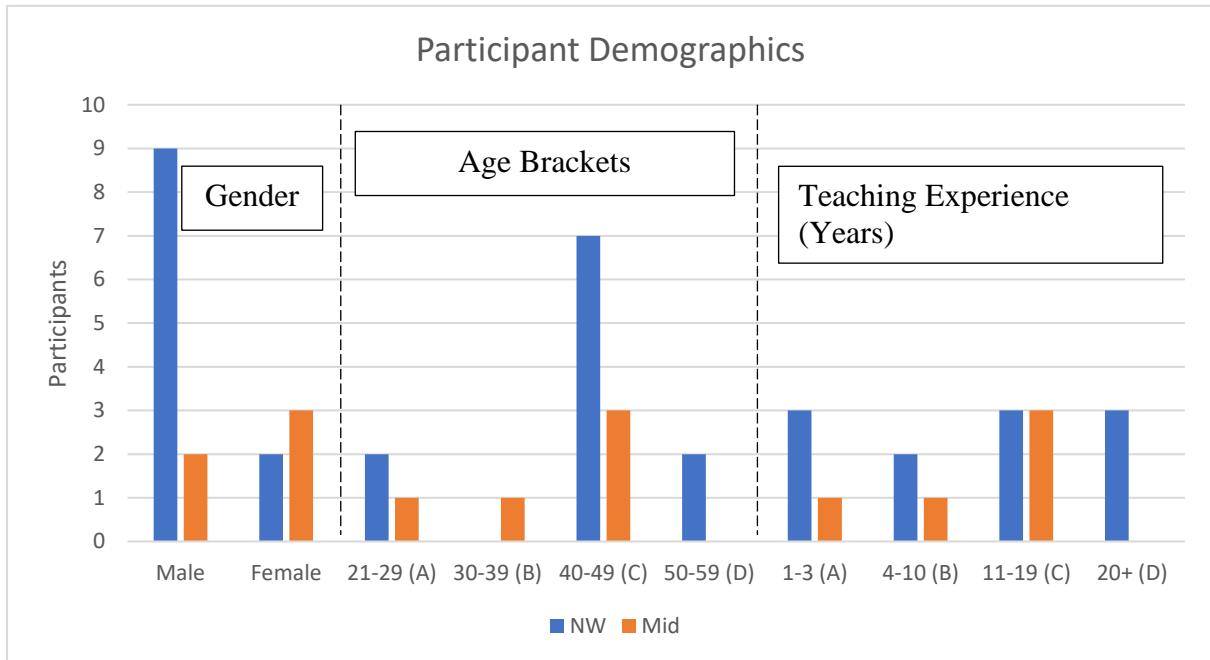
5.2 STUDY 1 PROCEDURE

The main aim of this study was to explore objective 3 which was introduced in the introductory chapter of this thesis. To ensure that this objective was achieved it was imperative to ensure the correct methodology (Q) and the execution of this methodology was accurate. Figure 11 highlights a basic outline to ensure that the practice of Q methodology was appropriate for this study.

Once the selected participants had been asked to be part of this study, I decided to invite each staff member separately to begin the conduction of research. Due to busy schedules, it was not possible to conduct this research in a group setting, so each participant was designated an allocated timeslot in which they would be able to complete the Q-Sort and conduct the post sort interview. The time allocated for each participant was 1 hour, but all the participants completed their Q-Sort within 30-40 minutes, leaving enough time to then complete the post sort interview. Prior to each Q-Sort being completed,

participants were asked to sign a consent form to demonstrate their acceptance of their involvement in the study and how this data would be used.

Figure 11 - Ensuring Q is Appropriate to meet Objective 3

Objective: Study 1		
Identify if there is a shared understanding and perception of Employability within and amongst relevant Higher Education Teaching Staff within Sport		
Q Methodology		
Q Sort (Identify initial perceptions)	Post Sort Interview (Further understanding about Q sort distribution choices)	Factor Analysis (Analyse if there are shared understandings across participants)

5.2.1 Q-SORT

At the time of data collection, the participant was provided with enough space to complete the Q-Sort and was directed towards the blank Q-Sort template which can been seen in Figure 12. The next step included presenting the participant with the 59 statements that would be arranged within the template (Appendix C). The statements were randomly ordered by myself when handed to the participant. To assist the participant I gave them a brief overview of the purpose of this study, as stated within the participant information sheet, and expressed that when thinking about Employability, how much significance or insignificance would they give to those Q-Sort statements. I then gave an example to state that if they disagreed with a statement it may be placed under -5, but if they strongly agree then it may go under 5. The purpose of this explanation was to ensure that participants knew how this Q-Sort would be measured. I ensured the participant was content with the information provided and asked if they had any further questions. I then vacated the room and allowed the participant to complete their individualised Q-Sort with no external influence or interference. I made sure

that I was close by to ensure that the participant could inform me of their completion or the occurrence of any problems.

Figure 12 - Q-Sort Template

| -5 | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5.2.2 POST SORT INTERVIEW

As stated within the literature by Watts and Stenner (2012) there is no requirement within Q Methodology to conduct a post sort interview but as stated by Damio (2018), conducting a post sort interview will add depth and further clarity to the findings. Due to this there are no rules or ways in which this interview should be conducted and is therefore left at the discretion of the researcher. The time between completed Q-Sorts and interviews was very

short (5-10 minutes) and therefore I decided to adopt an approach that was consistent but that allowed me to understand the specific details of each individual Q-Sort. Each participant was advised that the interview would be audio recorded and participants granted their permission. I began each interview by asking the participants to explain and elaborate on their choices of statement placement on the extreme ends of the Q-Sort. The purpose of this was to not only understand the strongest views of the individual but as a researcher it also allowed for a simple and consistent approach when undertaking each interview. The information gathered from this approach, allowed me to ask further probing questions based on the answers given before moving onto understanding what column '0' meant to them. Following this the participants were given some level of control, as I asked them if there was anything across the entire Q-Sort that they would like to comment on. The purpose of allowing the participant to openly discuss their Q-Sort was to give them the freedom of disclosing anything they felt particularly strong about that perhaps was not picked up within the initial question asked. Once the participant had concluded with the expression of their views, the interview was concluded.

5.2.3 FACTOR ANALYSIS

With the Q-Sort and Post Sort Interview complete, my attention was then focussed on analysing the data collected. Each Q Statement was allocated a number to run the data through the PQMethod software (Appendix C). After inputting all 16 individualised Q-Sorts into the PQMethod software, Centroid Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to extract the number of factors within the study. CFA was used based on the suggestion from Watts and Stenner (2012) who state that utilising CFA leaves all possible solutions open and allows a legitimate exploration of all possibilities, meaning the best solution is sought by the researcher, rather than an algorithm. After running CFA multiple times, experimenting with numerous factors and performing a varimax rotation there appeared to be 3 distinct factors emerging from the data. Webler, Danielson and Tuler (2009, p.31) suggest that factor selection should be determined by (1) simplicity: the fewer factors the better; (2) clarity, and the desire to minimise the number of confounders i.e., those who load on multiple factors;

(3) distinctness, with lower correlations between factors preferred, and (4) stability, indicated by those people who cluster and, thus, think similarly.   The guidance from Brown *et al.* (2009) aligns with the emergence of the 3 factors extracted from the data for this study.

5.3 FINDINGS: FACTORS A, B AND C

The findings from this study have presented 3 emergent factors within the data set, or to quote Damio (2018), 3 different types of people. The 3 emergent factors show that there are 3 distinct patterns in relation to shared views and opinions across the participants within this study. The factor matrix as evidenced within table 11 demonstrates the number of factors that have emerged, and which participants are significant within each factor. The emergence of 3 factors aligns to the work of Brown *et al.* (2009) and Damio (2018) who suggest that fewer factors are better and present a particular view (factor) as holding more value and strength of a shared perspective. Table 11 highlights significant factor loadings across the participants, highlighted in the table with 'X'.

Table 11 - The Factor Matrix: Study 1

	Factor		
Participant	A	B	C
staff1	**0.5812X**	0.4605	0.2898
staff2	0.2442	**0.8112X**	-0.0033
staff3	0.1158	**0.7913X**	0.0145
staff4	**0.7876X**	0.1767	0.0768
staff5	0.4055	0.2062	**0.6166X**
staff6	-0.0025	0.0236	**0.8871X**
staff7	0.2930	**0.4965X**	0.2646
staff8	0.4322	**0.6234X**	0.1539
staff9	0.3595	**0.5535X**	0.2671
staff10	**0.6972X**	0.1644	0.0338
staff11	0.5553	**0.5792X**	0.1547
staffa	-0.1720	**0.7062X**	0.0311
staffb	**0.5605X**	0.0169	0.4488
staffc	**0.7035X**	0.2116	0.0866
staffd	**0.8231X**	0.1481	0.1790
staffe	0.3484	**0.6484X**	0.0018
Eigenvalue	6.62	1.84	1.11
Unrotated % expl.Var.	41	12	7
Rotated % expl. Var	25	24	11

X = Significant Factor Loading

The factor loadings across Factors A and B are similar in weighting with only 2 participants being placed within Factor C. It could be argued that with only 2 participants being categorised under Factor C, perhaps there is a case for 2 emergent factors, but according to Watts and Stenner (2012) any factor with a loading of at least 2, is worthy of being classified as a factor. Further rationale for 3 factors is found within the Eigenvalue (Table 11) which exceeds 1.00 for each column. According to Watts and Stenner (2012) if an eigenvalue is 1.00 or above, this is deemed significant and therefore must be included as a relevant factor. When considering that each factor meets the eigenvalue threshold, with each participant allocated to only 1 factor, in addition to the combined study variance across the factors, the rationale for 3 emergent factors for this study exceed the thresholds of validity.

With each participant significantly factor loaded this signifies that there are 3 viewpoints in relation to this study. Table 12 shows the correlations between each factor to highlight commonalities or dissimilarities across the factors.

Table 12 - Correlations Between Factor Scores: Study 1

	A	B	C
A	1.00	0.51	0.30
B	0.51	1.00	0.18
C	0.30	0.18	1.00

As seen in Table 12 Factor A and B have the strongest correlation score of 0.51, but according to Ratner (2021) a correlation of 0.30 – 0.70 is considered moderately correlated. The work by Ratner therefore only signifies a moderate correlation between Factor A and B, and Factor C and A with a score of 0.30. With a correlation score of 0.18 between Factor B and C, this is a weak correlation. Table 13 demonstrates correlation strength across the factors based on the work of Ratner (2021).

Table 13 – Factor Correlation Strength: Study 1

Combined Factors	Weak (0 – 0.29)	Moderate (0.30-0.70)	Strong (0.71-1.00)
A and B		0.51	
B and C	0.18		
C and A		0.30	

Although it may be considered disappointing to not see a strong correlation between the factors, this does not deter away from the significance within the individual factors themselves. In this instance the factor correlations are showing that changes within one factor can impact on another and that this is more likely based on the strength of a correlation.

Following the 4 steps outlined by Damio (2018) 3 factors that meet the threshold tests have been established, relevant factor loading is evident across the 3 factors and there is an understanding of correlation across the factors. The only step left according to Damio (2018) is how can these people (factors) be defined. To label each factor accordingly, it is important to extract the distinguishing statements emerging from each factor. Tables 14-16 reflect the distinguishing statements within each factor. Within the upcoming sections of this chapter each factor will be scrutinised further to uncover the meaning behind these distinctly different viewpoints with further scrutiny taking place within Chapter 8, but before that, labelling these factors is required.

5.3.1 FACTOR A: LABELLING

In relation to labelling the factors, it is important to focus on the statements that were placed on the positive side of the Q-Sort, as this highlights what is largely considered to demonstrate the meaning of Employability to those participants who have been loaded against Factor A. Based on the table of distinguishing statements (Table 14) there are specific key words that appear within the statements ranked most positively and in correlation with the corresponding Z scores. The use of the words highlighted in red within Table 14 signal a shared perspective around Employability being an individual approach with individual responsibility. Analysis of the specific factors will be explored further in the later stages of this chapter, but there is a suggestion that the participants who have been loaded against Factor A are considering the individual aspect of Employability and the role an individual plays. The notion of the individual being a pivotal point within Employability aligns with points made within Chapter 3 (3.1.3) where it is highlighted that individual psychological understanding is a necessity when trying to understand the concept of Employability. Looking at personal identity and mindset whilst incorporating individual proactiveness, attitude, willingness and self-belief are key ingredients in successful Employability practice (Bridgstock, 2009; Dacre-Pool and Sewell, 2007; deGrip, Van loo and Sanders, 2004; Knight and Yorke, 2003; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Tomlinson, 2007; Tomlinson, 2012; Trought, 2012). Introducing psychology into the concept of Employability has become more prevalent from an individual perspective. Bridgstock (2009) states that it is not enough to merely see the actions of an individual without understanding what led to the execution of those actions. In relation to this study this is particularly relevant as the Q-Sort provides an insight into participant beliefs, but there is still the need to understand how those beliefs have been shaped. To ascertain more information about the Q-Sort construction, information from the Post Q Sort interviews will add value and depth to the findings. Based on the strengths of the positive statements for this factor, Factor A has been labelled: Employability is driven by the individual.

Table 14 - Factor A – Distinguishing Statements: Study 1

Statement No	Statement	Q-Sort Value	Z Score
31	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process	5	2.06
16	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market	4	1.17
34	The realisation of his/her potential in work	3	0.98
20	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems	3	0.94
8	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job	2	0.92
25	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	2	0.87
39	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual	0	0.00
56	Important for higher education institutes	-1	-0.24
12	Gaining work experience	-1	-0.34
30	More than the requirements of employers	-1	-0.41
57	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute	-2	-0.51
14	Gaining initial employment	-2	-0.57
42	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating	-2	-0.74
51	Complex	-3	-0.83
40	Securing any job	-3	-0.94
58	A marketing tool for higher education	-4	-1.79

* Phrases relevant to labelling this factor

5.3.2 FACTOR B: LABELLING

Labelling Factor B will follow the same approach as Factor A, with consideration given to those statements that have been ranked highest within the Q-Sort. The highlighted phrases/words within Table 15 demonstrate a strong belief about how Employability is perceived amongst those staff members who have been categorised as belonging to Factor B. As mentioned within section 5.3.1, an in-depth analysis of each factor will be presented later in this chapter, as the focus for now is to identify how Factor B could be clearly defined. For those participants who have been loaded against this factor, there is an obvious pattern relating to the role of Higher Education regarding Employability. There is plenty of literature around the role of Higher Education and Employability as discussed within Chapter 3 (3.1.2), but there is also mention about the combination of student/individual involvement also. Research from Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne (2017) suggest that universities need to consider student involvement within Employability as this will help create a student/graduate identity. The lack of student involvement is merely an approach to Employability that is driven by higher education alone (Pierce, 2002). There is some evidence of individual consideration from the participants, but this was only placed with a Q-Sort value of 1, meaning that this was not regarded as a significant priority whilst constructing the Q-Sort. Based on the statements that have been ranked positively within the Q-Sorts, Factor B has been labelled: **Employability is driven by Higher Education with an appreciation for the complexities involved**.

Table 15 - Factor B– Distinguishing Statements: Study 1

Statement No	Statement	Q-Sort Value	Z Score
56	Important for higher education institutes	5	1.69
28	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute	5	1.48
53	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning	4	1.31
52	Holds different meanings for different people	3	1.17
17	About the individuals characteristics	1	0.56
18	Dependent on the state of the labour market	0	-0.07
51	Complex	0	-0.10
27	The beliefs of a higher education institute	0	-0.25
19	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment	-1	-0.41
20	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems	-1	-0.49
25	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	-2	-0.60
9	Self-awareness and reflection	-3	-0.74
5	Benefiting the workforce	-3	-1.16
14	Gaining initial employment	-3	-1.25
42	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating	-4	-1.59
40	Securing any job	-4	-1.64

* Phrases relevant to labelling this factor

5.3.3 FACTOR C: LABELLING

In alignment with the 2 previous factors, there is yet another pattern emerging from this factor. The key words that have been focussed on Factor 3, as highlighted in Table 16 are focussing on employment, skills and how this can impact on societies and communities. Unlike Factors A and B, there is no mention of Higher Education or any particular focus on the individual. Participants that have been loaded against Factor C have demonstrated a strong belief towards Employability being focused on employment and how this can benefit societies and communities. This shared view aligns with the views of Flanders (1995) who states that Employability is industry driven and the purpose of Employability is to secure employment, meaning Employability should be built around the needs of specific employment sectors. There is also research from DHFETE (2002) who also agree that Employability is an industry driven approach, however, they also state that consideration must be given to the individual also. This view from DHFETE, is somewhat skewed from the views of the participants loaded in Factor C as there is no mention of individual involvement as a priority, apart from the statement with a Q-Sort value of 0 'Not my responsibility'. As discussed within the earlier sections a much more thorough analysis of each individual factor will be discussed to add further understanding to each factor and what can be understood from those shared viewpoints later in this chapter. Based on the strong viewpoints reflected in Factor C, this factor has been labelled: **Employability is industry driven and the contributions that can be made to society and communities.**

Table 16 - Factor C – Distinguishing Statements: Study 1

Statement No.	Statement	Q-Sort Value	Z Score
22	The acquisition of skills for life	5	2.06
51	Complex	5	2.06
25	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	4	1.64
6	Benefiting the community	4	1.49
15	Maintaining employment	4	1.33
42	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating	2	0.84
14	Gaining initial employment	1	0.41
40	Securing any job	1	0.09
59	Not my responsibility	0	-0.16
46	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning	-1	-0.27
32	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills	-1	-0.35
43	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment	-2	-0.41
35	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives	-2	-0.74
33	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers	-2	-0.76
44	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes	-3	-1.17
20	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems	-3	-1.25
56	Important for higher education institutes	-4	-1.31
23	The responsibility of higher education institutes	-4	-1.64

5.4 FACTOR A

"Employability is driven by the individual"

Within this section, Factor A will be dissected to look at the array of distinguishing statements (Table 14) generated from those participants identified as belonging to this factor. Utilising the post Q-Sort interviews will provide further understanding around the Q-Sort constructions from the participants within this study. As mentioned within section 5.3.1 there is a resonating pattern of Employability being an individualised driven concept, hence the label creation for this factor. Factor A shows a distinct viewpoint on Employability relating to individual thought processes and realisations which is evident within the idealised Q-Sort as shown in Figure 13. As part of the process of analysing the Q statements from each participant, the algorithm used within PQMethod software is able to cluster participants together based on similar statement placement. These participants are then classified as belonging to the same factor, in this instance Factor A. Figure 13 is a generated Q Sort that represents the ideal viewpoint of those participants placed within this factor based on the algorithm used in the PQMethod software and has been created from the output data as seen in Appendix I in reference to 'factor score for factor 1'. Within Table 14 there is an abundance of words/phrases that refer to how an individual may understand themselves. The use of words such as; ability, capability, proactive, capable and capacity, all indicate that for those participants who have been loaded against this factor, they strongly believe Employability must derive from the individual themselves. This is further backed up through the statements of the participants within this study:

> 1. *"Employability is about individual acquisition, admittedly this can be assisted by other external influences, but the individual must be the driver"* (staffc).

> 2. *"There has to be a form of accountability from the student themselves and an internal drive to be better in preparation for entering employment beyond university"* (staffb).

3. "Employability is assessing key skills and attributes on an individual level, but to do this effectively self-reflection and awareness is the starting point" (staff1)*.*

4. "To better yourself, you first need to assess what you are already good at and what you need to improve, and how this aligns with your future career goals. For me this is the basis in which individual Employability must be built" (staff4).

Figure 13 - Idealised Q-Sort – Factor A: Study 1

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Complex (51)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	Benefiting the individual (4)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)
Not needed (54)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	Gaining initial employment (14)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Benefitting the economy (7)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
Not my responsibility (59)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Securing any job (40)	A set of achievements (1)	Gaining work experience (12)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Benefitting the community (6)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	
		Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Maintaining employment (15)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)		
			Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)			
				A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	Being prepared for employment (11)				
					About the individuals characteristics (17)					
					Getting a graduate level job (41)					

131

The quotes show that there is an awareness that other drivers play a role within Employability but there is a strong viewpoint focussed on the individual to bring those additional drivers into play. Quote 1 (staffc) mentions external influences and when asked to expand on this, the participant responded with the following commentary:

> 5. *"External influences could be many things really, from personal beliefs and experiences to university influence from staff or even classmates. I think when students enrol at university they often come with a pre-set idea of where they want to be or at least the type of role they want, so I do also believe building themselves to fit within specified roles is also an external factor that plays a part"* (staffc).

Capturing information like this, highlights that although there is a strong indication of individual drive and involvement within the concept of Employability, an awareness of how this can be impacted and influenced is also needed. There are also previews of this within quotes 2 (staffb) and 4 (staff4) who mention that consideration must also be given to entering employment and alignment to future career goals. When assessing how the findings from this study match those views shared within literature, consideration has been given to who and what these participants represent. The common denominator across the participants within study 1 is their employment status, as active members of a higher education institution (HEI) within the UK. This is important since these participants are of course providing a personal viewpoint, but they are also representing 2 higher education institutions. It is therefore clear that comparisons of the findings within this study be compared to the literature surrounding the views of HEIs which is covered in chapters 2 (2.3) and 3 (3.1.2). As a dominant presence within the literature surrounding Employability, work by Yorke, in particular his research in 2006, boldly suggests that within the arena of Higher Education, Employability is multifaceted and can therefore not be given a set meaning. The research by Yorke suggests that a 'one size fits all' approach cannot be adopted to the concept and perhaps is signalling towards Employability being open to interpretation dependent on specific needs. The variation of comments across the participants situated within this factor loading is an indicator of just that, as the breadth and scope of commentary justifies the sheer subjectivity surrounding Employability and that more than one aspect is important. In this instance the resounding aspect of importance is an individual drive, but the commentary does

highlight that more than this is required. When comparing the views of Yorke (2006) to the idealised Q-Sort (figure 13), statement no 53, which was taken from the research by Yorke, has been placed towards the bottom of the -1 column, showing that this statement leans towards 'most disagree'.   This is interesting as the commentary provided is showing awareness of multiple stakeholders, but there has been no mention across the participants of the concept being multifaceted.   In a similar vein, reference to something being multifaceted could also add to the complexities of a subject, but this has been perceived as not being the case when comparing this to the idealised Q-Sort (statement 51, column -3). Throughout literature, Employability is continually perceived as complex, so for the findings within this factor to reflect this is largely contrasted and goes against most Employability literature. However, quote 5 (staffc) demonstrates that fitting into a specific role and using this as preparation for employment is an important aspect coupled alongside an individual approach to Employability. This viewpoint is like the research outcomes of that by Tomlinson (2012) who mentions about the integration of industry being crucial to Employability development, but with the difference being that this needs to be a relational approach with HEIs.   The research by Tomlinson combines HEIs and Industry, whereas the findings and commentary from participant staffc (Quote 5), indicate a relational approach between the individual and industry, with no mention relating to the specific role, if any, of HEIs. It is unfair to label the beliefs of an institution upon the individuals who work within it, but as an employee it is expected that institutional beliefs are translated through the workforce, in the case of this study, the university staff members. Therefore, the findings from this study can indicate 2 distinct viewpoints, (1) staff members are merely the vessels in which university beliefs of Employability are carried, (2) each individual staff member will portray a personal viewpoint of Employability. In relation to point 1, the idealised Q-Sort and the participant quotes have been compared to HEI focussed research regarding Employability, but there is still the need to capture findings based on personal viewpoints and how this aligns with literature relating to the concept being an individualised approach. The understanding of Employability from the participants within this factor align with findings in literature that state, with an individualised approach to Employability there is the need to understand and ascertain skills in preparation for how this will accommodate the acquisition of employment (Dearing, 1997; deGrip, Van loo and Sanders, 2004; Klutymans and Ott, 1999; Stephenson, 1998; Thijssen, Van der Heijden and Rocco, 2008; Tomlinson, 2007; Yorke, 2006). Like the

participants within this factor, the literature shows a weighted argument for individual responsibility, but with the awareness of how understanding industry is also required. Although references to 'employment' and 'future career goals' are mentioned within quotes 2 and 4, there is no mention of understanding the job market therefore alluding to how an individualised approach to Employability can be impacted. Previous research has indicated the need to consider industry in order to shape an individual approach within Employability (Bridgstock, 2009; Brown, Hesketh and Williams, 2003; Canadian Government Labour Force Development Board, 1994; Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen, 1998; DHFETE, 2002; Flanders, 1995; Forrier and Sels, 2003; Harvey, Locke and Morey, 2002; Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser, 2013; HM Treasury, 1997; Romgens,Scoupe and Beausaert, 2020; Thijssen, Van der Heijden and Rocco, 2008; Tomlinson, 2012; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006; Yorke, 2006). In addition to this, the views of Daniel, Andrea and Gaughen (1998); Tomlinson (2012) expressed that Employability is an interdependent of the job market and understanding the way in which job markets change can have an impact on how an individualised Employability approach is tailored. There are strong views both within literature and from the findings within this factor that an individual approach to Employability plays a pivotal role, but consideration and awareness must be given to other factors. When assessing the 'individual' element within this factor as the key words/phrases mentioned at the start of this section, this indicates that mentality/psychological approaches on an individual level are crucial. Research has shown that personal identity and individual mindset is a crucial element of the individual conceptualisation of Employability (Bridgstock, 2009; Dacre-Pool and Sewell, 2007; deGrip, Van loo and Sanders, 2004; Knight and Yorke, 2003; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Tomlinson, 2007; Tomlinson, 2012; Trought, 2012). This research resonates with the views in quote 2 (staffb), quote 3 (staff1) and quote 4 (staff4) who mention that individuals must be accountable and able to assess their own skills and attributes through means of self-reflection and personal awareness. During the interview with participant 'staff1', I asked them to elaborate further on the points made in quote 3 to expand on the need to self-reflect and demonstrate awareness. The participant replied with the following:

6. "To achieve the best outcome for yourself you need to initially understand your current position compared to where you want to be. Without self-reflection and awareness of what is going on in the working world, you are failing to prepare yourself to be in the best position possible after graduating. I completely stand by that Employability is an individual based approach, but in order for this to be effective you have to understand yourself and measure that alongside factors that will impact your future, e.g. industry sectors or upskilling yourself to be competitive" (staff1).

The views of this participant (staff1) indicate that they have a holistic approach to Employability whilst maintaining the idea that their personal view is that the concept is largely individually driven. Viewpoints such as this, echo elements of the modelling set out by QAA (2014) as highlighted in chapter 2, who have demonstrated 3 key stakeholders within the concept and development of Employability. This section has so far commented on the beliefs of the participants in relation to what they believe Employability is, but in contrast there is also the requirement to understand what these participants believe Employability not to be.

When considering the significant statements identified within Table 14 which have been ranked negatively by the participants, there is clear shift in comparison to those statements ranked positively. These statements are focused more on higher education and industry. This therefore portrays a perspective from the participants loaded against this factor as the concept of Employability not being defined by higher education or industry in their view, which is interesting considering the role in which these participants represent. When asking the participants to expand on their Q-Sort constructions for the statements placed at the negative end of the scale, the responses varied:

7. "Universities or higher education in general does have a role to play in Employability to an extent, otherwise Employability wouldn't be such a big deal within HE, but I believe institutions should facilitate Employability from person to person, rather than adopting a one size fits all approach. If this approach is taken then this is when I feel institutions are taking Employability away from students and making it about what they want to achieve at an institutional level" (staff10).

8. "I do understand why some believe Employability is a marketing tool for universities, but personally in relation to Employability, it is about ensuring we mould students into becoming employable within the sector in which they want to work" (staffd)

9. "Employability is not about industry, as taking this approach boxes students into pigeonholes that make it so difficult to break free from once they have graduated" (staff1).

The comments above show a similar view on why they feel disagreement with the statements placed at the – end of the Q-Sort. However, when comparing quote number 8 and 9 they are quite different in the way they feel industry has a role to play in the overall concept of Employability. Participant 'staffd' (quote 8) refers to industry as being the image in which students are moulded. This view correlates to the work of McArdle (2007) who states that industry should not drive Employability, but it deserves a seat at the table in relation to understanding industry expectations to assist in the development of personal Employability development. The statement provided by participant 'staffd' is somewhat confusing as credit is being given for industry whilst their Q-Sort has ranked industry related statements towards the Q-Sort in which they most disagree. In contrast to this view, quote 9 from participant 'staff1' has shared that Employability should not be an industry driven concept and that by doing this can result in detrimental impacts on students. These different perspectives enhance the idea of Employability being complex as this evidence of what is deemed significant within the concept of Employability raises more questions than answers. The views of participant 'staff1' are shared within literature as Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert (2020) state that industry driven Employability is usually a selfish take on sector/industry needs which therefore leads to a workforce that is perfect for a company but not always for the industry.

Even though the participants that have been classified as belonging to this factor possess a shared view on an individual approach, there are still differences amongst these participants. Conducting Post Q-Sort interviews has proved invaluable to understand the extent in which these views differ, as on the surface these participants are seen as having a shared viewpoint, but upon further scrutiny there are differences in the detail, and simple congregate of participants based upon factor analysis does not paint an entirely accurate

picture. The views of the participants align much more strongly with literature focussed towards an individual approach to Employability, whilst also demonstrating a weak alignment with literature from a HEI perspective. To delve deeper into the views of the participants allocated to Factor A, consideration has also been given to how the original Q set statements have been constructed across the idealised Q-Sort based on the original literature statements in which they derived. As mentioned within Chapter 4, the Q Set contained 59 statements, that originated from the dissection of 20 definitions of Employability within literature. Figure 14 demonstrates clustered statements that derive from the same literature source to understand how participants constructed their Q-Sorts without the knowledge that some derived from the same source.   The most obvious split of agreement vs disagreement from one piece of literature is those highlighted in dark green (statements 4,2,8,5,3,52,7,53,6 and 1), with a spread of 4 to -2. Dissecting the statements from literature into smaller statements has presented the participants with an unknowing to agree and/or disagree with components of an original statement without the restriction of being in either full agreement or disagreement with 1 piece of literature. From a researcher perspective, this could also demonstrate that within Employability literature there is a case for all bases being covered, and rather than a generic statement on the concept, multiple factors have been considered. There is also evidence of specific cluster patterns such as statements 54 and 59, which has both been placed in the -5 column, therefore indicating that there is complete agreement of these statements as 1 original literature source. The distribution of statements in the idealised Q-Sort also highlights the weighting within literature that is focused on the different conceptualisations of Employability. The analysis of this factor has grouped the selected participants (staff1, staff4, staff10, staffb, staffc, staffd) as defining Employability as an individual approach, and it is clear from figure 14 that there are multiple resources who also share this view. The idea of an individual approach to Employability that has emerged from this factor can therefore be affiliated to the Protean Career Theory (PCT). PCT is based on the idea that an individual will strive for success of their own accord based on their own personal attitude and desire to be successful (Hall, 1976). Although the participants within this study are not the focus of this thesis, their beliefs on Employability and how this links to theoretical concepts is crucial for understanding how this could translate through to students they interact with.

Figure 14 - Idealised Q-Sort Factor A – Q Set Dissection: Study 1

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Complex (51)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	Benefiting the individual (4)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)
Not needed (54)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	Gaining initial employment (14)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Benefitting the economy (7)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
Not my responsibility (59)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Securing any job (40)	A set of achievements (1)	Gaining work experience (12)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Benefitting the community (6)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	
		Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Maintaining employment (15)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)		
			Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)			
				A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	Being prepared for employment (11)				
					About the individuals characteristics (17)					
					Getting a graduate level job (41)					

NB: Shared colours represent statements that originate from the same literature source.

138

When referring to the idealised Q-Sort there are statements that directly relate to PCT, such as 'Self-awareness and reflection' (statement 9), 'The realisation of his/her potential in work' (statement 34) and 'The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process' (statement 31). Statements such as the ones mentioned have all been constructed to suggest a strong sense of agreement when defining Employability. PCT encompasses the individual desire and drive for improvement and progression, and this is built upon by the internal motivators an individual possesses. As previously mentioned within this section, defining Employability as an individually driven concept, means the individual must possess a desire and a willingness to develop, which correlates to the theoretical concept of PCT.

Further discussion to compare factors, links to literature and how this aligns to possible theories will be discussed within Chapter 8.

5.5 FACTOR B

"Employability is driven by Higher Education with an appreciation for the complexities involved"

Within this section, Factor B will be dissected to look at the array of distinguishing statements (Table 15) generated from those participants identified as belonging to this factor. The post Q-Sort interviews will provide further understanding around the Q-Sort constructions from the participants within this study. As mentioned within section 5.3.2 there is an obvious pattern highlighting the role of higher education within Employability amongst the participants loaded against this factor, hence the label creation. Factor B shows a distinct viewpoint on Employability relating to the role of HEIs but with a hint of awareness for the complexities involved when defining Employability which is evident within the idealised Q-Sort as shown in Figure 15. Within Table 15 the terminology in the statements that have been placed in the + element of the Q-Sort is largely focused on higher education, but also include use of terms such as multifaceted, complex, and holding different meanings for different

people. some understanding that the concept is also not as simple as that.   This is further backed up through the commentary of the participants within this study:

Figure 15 - Idealised Q-Sort – Factor B: Study 1

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Not my responsibility (59)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Benefitting the economy (7)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Maintaining employment (15)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
A tick box exercise (50)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	A set of achievements (1)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Being prepared for employment (11)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)
Not needed (54)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)
	Securing any job (40)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	
		Gaining initial employment (14)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)		
			Benefitting the community (6)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Complex (51)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)			
				A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)				
					The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)					
					The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)					

141

Unlike Factor A, this factor signals a strong belief that for those participants loaded against Factor B, higher education is at the forefront of Employability as a concept, but with

> *10. "It is our responsibility to make the students employable. It is up to us to know what skills the students will need and incorporate this into our teaching practice" (staff11)*

> *11. "As an academic we spend a lot of time identifying skills and more importantly trying to solve the puzzle of how we transfer these skills into the working world for students, I believe the role of higher education is pivotal, but I do think there are flaws in the way this is executed" ('staff3)'*

> *12. "Employability is becoming more and more important for higher education institutes as it drives some of the metrics in which universities are measured" (staff7)*

The commentary provided across the 3 quotes, creates a picture of higher education being an important part of the concept of Employability. The findings from this factor outline a responsibility shift on universities themselves and as a direct result this led to commentary which provided a contrasting perspective to those participants within Factor A. There is very little consideration for the individual within the views shared from the participants loaded against this factor. Utilising the idealised Q-Sort (figure 15), there is a hint of individual consideration with statement 33 ranked against column 5, but this statement also highlights a relational awareness alongside industry. The statements listed within the same column (statements 56 and 28) align with the commentary from the 3 quotes above stating that the concept of Employability is driven by higher education. Quote 10 (staff11) places all emphasis on understanding what skills are required for students to be employable. Work by Stephenson (1998) shares similar views to that of participant 'staff11' who believes that as a basic requirement HEIs should be providing fundamental skill development opportunities to students. This is further concurred through the research by Harvey (2001); Pierce, (2002); Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert, (2020), who suggest students must be equipped with transferrable basic core skills that will prepare them for leaving education. This research transfers to the comment made by participant 'staff3' (quote 11) who acknowledges the need

for skill development and the transferability of those skills, but equally raises concerns about the way in which this is done within higher education. Tymon (2013) states when Employability is introduced and integrated within education from only a one-dimensional perspective, the chances of failing are highly likely. As mentioned, Stephenson (1998) shows awareness of the need for skill development, but he also adds that an element of psychological development amongst students should be encouraged. This adds to the research conducted more recently by Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne (2017) who report the inclusion of psychological development within students will allow them to form an 'identity', which will enable them to self-assess, reflect and develop in areas such as Employability and therefore lending itself to creating a much more rounded graduate. Whilst the literature states the need for psychological development within individuals, there is no research that mentions how universities do this and could perhaps be one of the flaws mentioned by participant 'staff3'. Upon further scrutiny of the comments provided by participant 'staff3' there was some confusion when considering the information provided in quote 11 alongside the research from Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne (2017). The participant (staff3) added the following further commentary:

13. *"'I don't believe you have to be self-aware or even good at reflection in relation to Employability" (staff3)*

This comment is somewhat skewed from the literature and contradicts the need for reflection and self-awareness as stated within literature. In addition to the work of Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne, there is a profound message within Employability related literature that speaks of the need for self-awareness, regardless of which conceptualisation of Employability is being referred to (Bridgstock, 2009; Harvey, 2001; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Knight and Yorke, 2003; Tomlinson, 2012; Yorke 2006). Literature suggests that if self-awareness is prevalent in the concept of Employability, then this can lead to better opportunities for Employability development (Bridgstock, 2009; Harvey, 2001; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Knight and Yorke, 2003; Tomlinson, 2012; Yorke 2006). However, to determine levels of self-awareness and reflection, this practice needs to be encouraged by HEIs, but there is evidence

within this study to suggest that presumptions are made about individuals when embarking on a higher education journey:

14. "I believe that students who come to university are already in possession of basic core skills and therefore this isn't a responsibility on the institution" (staff2)

Although the statement above (quote 14) could be classified as presumptuous, research by Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen (1998) found similar comments made by the participants within their study. They reported that although an appreciation for the role in which universities must play in the development of Employability, battles relating to 'who is responsible' were apparent. Tymon (2013) picked up on the findings from Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen in his work, and made points relating to the role in which university politics skew the concept of Employability and rather than it being classified as a developmental aspect of education and beyond, it is in fact often seen as a metric driven initiative. The idea of Employability being utilised within education as an initiative to improve HEI metrics is not uncommon, and it was also evident within this study:

15. "'Institutions have to be seen to stand out and therefore Employability unfortunately is sometimes used as the scapegoat to enhance metrics due to the fact Employability can be open to interpretation and therefore shaped in a way that favours an institution" (staffA)

Utilising the concept of Employability as a metric driven agenda is nothing new. In 2010, Willetts stated university expectations and a target driven culture, enable Employability to be used for their own benefit to try and meet or exceed targets that will be looked on favourably in the hope of securing more students and generating income. When aligning this to the way in which Employability is measured within higher education, it is understandable why some would think this way. As mentioned within Chapter 2 (2.3.3) the use of Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) is a universally utilised resource that is often adopted to measure and assess Employability across HEIs in the UK. There are however flaws to this survey and has been subjected to many criticisms regarding the validity of how accurately it measures Employability. It could be argued that the complexities of Employability as a

concept and sheer difficulty in defining Employability allows for flexibility when measuring the concept, but this then leaves the question of, why is this therefore a 'one size fits all' metric if each institution has its own interpretation of Employability? Therefore, there are flaws with the DLHE. Due to the concept of Employability being open to interpretation, the information captured by DLHE therefore must be vague to ensure it can be applied to all institutions. In relation to this study there was very little mentioned about DLHE, but a comment relating to data capturing being time critical was mentioned by one of the participants:

16. *"'I don't think gaining a job within a specified time after graduating has anything to do with Employability" (staff8)*

This participant was expressing their views on how Employability should be a developmental process during education and beyond, and not just measured once the education journey has ended. In a follow up comment participant 'staff8' added:

17. *"Employability should be a constant development, not a one-time thing. Adding a time element to Employability is only allowing us to know something about a person's Employability at that moment in time, but that is not how Employability or even the world works" (staff8)*

The comments provided by this participant express the disagreement of how DLHE survey incorporates a time element to capturing and measuring an individual's Employability to assist in university metrics. Bannon et al (2016) and UUK (2016) has expressed their concerns about the reliability of the data produced from the DLHE and feel the questions work in favour of an institution rather than creating an accurate picture about the individual completing the survey.

It is evident from this factor that the participants loaded against Factor B, believe that Employability must be driven by higher education, yet they are aware of the complexities of the concept and how other influences can impact. As with the analysis conducted within Factor A, these participants have not only shared personal viewpoints, but they are representative of Higher Education as members of 2 institutions. In alignment with the

analysis conducted in the previous factor, a point of interest is to assess how the participants within this factor, constructed their Q-Sorts from the original Q-Set deconstruction of statements, which is demonstrated in figure 16. When analysing the clustering of the origin of Q-Set statements there is a similar pattern emerging to the one within Factor A.

Figure 16 - Idealised Q-Sort Factor B – Q Set Dissection: Study 1

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Not my responsibility (59)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Benefitting the economy (7)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Maintaining employment (15)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
A tick box exercise (50)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	A set of achievements (1)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Being prepared for employment (11)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)
Not needed (54)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)
	Securing any job (40)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	
		Gaining initial employment (14)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)		
			Benefitting the community (6)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Complex (51)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)			
				A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)				
					The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)					
					The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)					

NB: Shared colours represent statements that originate from the same literature source.

147

The statements seem largely spread across the Q-Sort but unlike within Factor A, the individual statements again are spread throughout, but within this factor, they are clustered at the opposite end of the Q-Sort. Except for statements 42,41 and 48, there is a large clustering of statements highlighted in light yellow. These statements are representative of showing a focus towards higher education (statements 45,46,44,29,43,47) which is fitting with the labelling of this factor and the commentary provided from the participants. As suggested during the analysis of factor A, the fact there is minimal clustering from the same sources, shows that the definitions of Employability within literature are broad and therefore allowing a multi conceptualisation of Employability. There is reference to the participants within this study having an awareness of other factors that can influence Employability, but there is a strong allegiance of higher education playing a pivotal role in the concept of Employability. This view aligns with the theoretical concept of Human Capital Theory, which is also prevalent within Employability literature.

Human Capital Theory (HCT) points towards the productivity that can be gained through the investment of education and training (Becker, 1964). Although the participants within this study are not directly referring to their own investment in education, they are representing the education in which productivity can be improved within students. Therefore, in relation to combining the findings of this factor analysis with HCT, the participants loaded onto this factor (participants staff2, staff3, staff7, staff8, staff9, staff11, staffa, staffe) are advocating the need for education to play a significant role within the concept of Employability. Human Capital Theory utilises education as the driver for acquiring knowledge, experience and capability, that will lead to successful employment and higher earnings and therefore labelling education as a secure investment for individual development (Baartman and De Bruijn, 2011; Smith, 2010; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006). As mentioned throughout this section the role of higher education has been given priority within this factor.

Further discussion to compare factors, links to literature and how this aligns to possible theories will be discussed within Chapter 8.

5.6 FACTOR C

"Employability is industry driven and the contributions that can be made to society and communities"

Following the pattern of the analysis of the 2 preceding factors, Factor C will be dissected to look at the array of distinguishing statements (Table 16) generated from those participants identified as belonging to this factor. Comments from the post Q-Sort interviews will provide further understanding around the Q-Sort constructions from the participants within this study. The idealised Q-Sort (Figure 17) for this factor largely differs from the preceding factors within this study. The participants loaded against this factor define Employability as a much more industry driven approach but with consideration given to how this can benefit society and the economy. Admittedly the loading of this factor is significantly less than on the previous factors, but as stated within Q methodology literature, a loading of 2 or more participants is deemed significant (Watts and Stenner, 2012). The terminology highlighted in table 16 signifies a direct correlation to employment, with use of phrases such as gaining employment, maintaining employment, and securing any job. Within the statements from the participants loaded against this factor, this was also apparent:

> 18. *"The purpose of Employability is to gain employment, so regardless of the sector or even job role, if someone secures a job, surely this means they demonstrate good Employability skills" (staff5)*

> 19. *"In my personal opinion if a graduate secures a role in the relevant sector, then I would classify this as a success from an Employability perspective" (staff5)*

Figure 17 - Idealised Q-Sort – Factor C: Study 1

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)
A tick box exercise (50)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Gaining initial employment (14)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	Complex (51)
Not needed (54)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	Being prepared for employment (11)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Gaining work experience (12)	Benefitting the community (6)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)
	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	Maintaining employment (15)	
		The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Benefitting the economy (7)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Benefiting the individual (4)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)		
			The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)			
				A set of achievements (1)	Not my responsibility (59)	Securing any job (40)				
					Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)					
					The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)					

150

The quotes provided (quote 18 and 19) are from the same participant and demonstrates a perspective in which securing employment determines Employability success. Research from Bridgstock (2009) encompasses both an individual approach to Employability as well as an industry driven approach. In the research from Bridgstock focussed on an industry driven perspective, she refers to the idea of creating a list of requirements to fit employer needs that can be used by individuals to ensure they are deemed 'employable'. Although Bridgstock does mention the need to be employable, the way in which this is done, encompasses more than a simple check list. Additional research backed up this view from Bridgstock and added that to create longevity in employment, an individual cannot assess themselves based on an employer checklist, as this also rules out the possibility of transferability across sectors (Archer and Davison, 2008; Robles, 2012; Succi and Canovi, 2020; Succi, 2018). This research suggests that simply obtaining employment is not enough, and that to be transferrable a different approach is required. The restriction of analysis within this factor lies with the fact that only 2 participants have been loaded against factor C, and therefore only being able to consider 2 viewpoints. The commentary from both participants portrayed very similar messages about how they define Employability, both with an industry focus and how utilising this can assess the success of Employability within their institution. Further commentary was provided that began to focus on how shaping students to fit a particular role could assist those students when trying to secure work experience/placement opportunities during their time at university:

> 20. *"Some may disagree with this, but I personally feel that during a students time at university, they may be presented with opportunities that are very difficult to come by in the real world, therefore students will often ask 'how can I secure this opportunity'. To me that means this student is prepared to be moulded to fit in with that organisation to secure the opportunity, and in my experience, this type of approach has led to students securing employment in a sector they want before they even graduate. To me, that is an Employability success story"* (staff6).

The quote by participant 'staff6' is a slight variant on the views of participant 'staff5', of course they both believe that Employability is and can be driven by industry but the rationale behind this is different from each participant. Quote 20 implies that an individual who shapes

151

themselves to an opportunity is different to those who shape themselves to a sector, as securing the opportunity is the aim for the individual. When referencing how these findings refer to literature there is some contradiction. As evidenced in Chapter 2 (2.4) and Chapter 3 (3.2) industries have stressed the need for basic skills and competencies to be developed amongst employees, but when comparing this to the views of those participants in this factor, they have a neutral/negative viewpoint on this being important to the concept of Employability. Research suggests that industry requirements should be considered when addressing the concept of Employability, but this should not be done in isolation and from only an industry perspective (Ashraf et al, 2018; Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser, 2013).

When focussing on the disagreement (-5) end of the Q-Sort, there are similarities to the previous 2 factors in relation to statements 50 and 54, as all 3 factors have highlighted that the concept of Employability is needed and is not seen as a tick box exercise. However, in this factor, in accordance with figure 17, the statement in which participants mostly disagree with is statement 18, signalling that the participants loaded against factor C, strongly disagree that the concept of Employability is dependent on the state of the labour market. This statement was elaborated on by participant 'staff5' who states:

21. "The reason I disagree that Employability is not dependent on the state of the labour market is because this is irrelevant. The state of the job market does not stop the need for people to obtain employment, therefore Employability is needed, regardless of the state of the labour market" (staff5)

The point made by this participant is valid in the sense of employment is still required for people to earn a living, but the statement in quote 21 was the only detail provided and therefore leaving the meaning of this open to interpretation. This comment also goes against what literature states, which is that Employability will differ dependent on the state of the labour market, and this is mentioned throughout literature related to the concept of Employability (Bridgstock, 2009; Brown, Hesketh and Williams, 2003; Canadian Government Labour Force Development Board, 1994; Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen, 1998; DHFETE, 2002; Flanders, 1995; Forrier and Sels, 2003; Harvey, Locke and Morey, 2002; Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser, 2013; HM Treasury, 1997; Romgens,Scoupe and Beausaert, 2020;

Thijssen, Van der Heijden and Rocco, 2008; Tomlinson, 2012; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006; Yorke, 2006). In keeping with the previous analysis conducted over the previous 2 factors, an idealised Q-Sort showing the original Q-Set statements is provided in figure 18 to assess how the views from literature have been disseminated across the idealised Q-Sort. As seen within figure 18 there is somewhat more clustering of statements originating from single definitions of Employability than what has been seen within Factors A and B, as a lot of the colour coding is much closer together, except for those statements highlighted in orange (statements 17,18,19,15). These statements are applicable to the comment surrounding the misalignment between literature and the viewpoint of the participants in this factor. Unlike the previous factors, the participants within this factor have unknowingly agreed with a significant amount of the original concourse statements in their entirety.

Further discussion to compare factors, links to literature and how this aligns to possible theories will be discussed within Chapter 8.

Figure 18 - Idealised Q-Sort Factor C – Q Set Dissection: Study 1

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)
A tick box exercise (50)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Gaining initial employment (14)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	Complex (51)
Not needed (54)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	Being prepared for employment (11)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Gaining work experience (12)	Benefitting the community (6)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)
	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	Maintaining employment (15)	
		The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Benefitting the economy (7)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Benefiting the individual (4)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)		
			The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)			
				A set of achievements (1)	Not my responsibility (59)	Securing any job (40)				
					Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)					
					The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)					

NB: Shared colours represent statements that originate from the same literature source.

154

5.7 COMPARING FACTORS A.B AND C

An obvious point to make when discussing the 3 emergent factors within this study, is that differences across all 3 are expected, hence the emergence of 3 factors. The differences across the factors have highlighted 3 separate conceptualisations in relation to the concept of Employability. The 3 conceptualisations align to the QAA model (2014) utilised in Chapter 2, but this will be discussed in further detail within Chapter 8. Although understanding different viewpoints is important, and aligns to the paradigm of a constructivist approach, the varied viewpoints need to be considered further due to the roles in which these participants play in relation to students. To expand on this further and assist with discussion in Chapter 8, table 17 highlights the number of staff members from each institution loaded against each factor.

Table 17 - Participant Factor Loading per Institution: Study 1

	Factor A	Factor B	Factor C
University 1 (NW)	3	6	2
University 2 (MID)	3	2	0

The relevance of table 17 emphasises that the variation of different views across members of staff within the same institution adds to the complex and confusing nature of the concept of Employability. As an example, if a student was being taught Employability related content by several members of staff, and those different staff members featured in different factors within this study, there is a risk that, that student would be taught 3 different conceptualisations of Employability. This could be argued that having a perspective from each conceptualisation is not wrong, but there is also the case that this could add to an already complex concept. This is particularly prevalent as mentioned within Chapter 3 (3.2.1) when considering the influence that staff can have on students in relation to teaching, learning and student engagement (Evans and Kozhevnikova, 2011; Fransen, Kirschner and Erkens, 2011).

The impact of these different viewpoints will be considered in detail within the concluding chapter of this thesis (Chapter 8).

Reverting to the 3 factors within this study, table 18 demonstrates what each factor represents and highlights any similarities that have emerged across the factors. The most significant similarity that was captured across each factor was that Employability is a requirement and that it is not perceived as a tick box exercise.

Table 18 - The Conceptualisations of Factors A, B and C: Study 1

	Label	Conceptualisation	Similarities
Factor A	Employability is driven by the individual	Individual	
Factor B	Employability is driven by higher education with an appreciation for the complexities involved	Higher Education	Agreement across all the factors that Employability is a concept that is needed and is not perceived as a tick box exercise
Factor C	Employability is industry driven and the contributions that can be made to society and communities	Industry	

These viewpoints disagree with the statements put forward by AGCAS (2011) and Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen (1998) who state that the way in which Employability is often used as a vehicle for other agendas within higher education can portray the idea of the concept being nothing more than a tick box exercise and therefore leading to the notion of Employability not being needed. The shared viewpoints across each factor align to most of the literature surrounding the concept of Employability regardless of the conceptualisation. In reference to table 18 and the identification of how each factor has been aligned to a conceptualisation, this links with the model from the QAA (2014) which was introduced in Chapter 2 (2.2). The

difference between the model from QAA and the conceptualisations emerging from this study is that the QAA model identifies 3 key stakeholders when conceptualising Employability, in comparison to the findings from this study which has identified 3 conceptualisations emerging from one of those key stakeholders. Although the labelling of the QAA model is slightly out of alignment with the conceptualisations emerging from this study, they are still applicable, e.g. students – individual, employers – industry.   The findings of 3 emerging conceptualisations can also be explored using the idealised Q-Sorts for each factor by highlighting which conceptualisation each statement originated from. Figures 19-21 outline the idealised Q-Sorts for each factor when considering the emergent contextualisation's that have become evident through this study. Utilising figures 19-21 there is a clear difference from a contextual perspective about how the statements have been constructed. It is evident from the idealised Q-Sorts for each factor that there are significant clusters relating to a specific contextualisation of Employability. Figure 19 highlights a large cluster of statements colour coded as orange which signify statements relating to an individual approach to Employability. Although these statements are spread across the entire Q-Sort, the large clustering towards the + side of the sort (0-5) implies a strong relationship between the participants views around Employability and their beliefs in alignment to these statements. This is also evident within figure 20, with the difference of green clusters representative of statements towards higher education.   This suggests a strong agreement with these statements having meaning for the participants loaded against factor B. Figure 21 is not as obvious as the previous factors but when comparing all 3 figures there is an obvious shift of industry related statements moving across to the far-right side of the Q Sort which implies participant agreement with those statements. Figures 19-21 will be discussed further within Chapter 8 to provide a platform of discussion about how the factors align to literature.

Figure 19 - Individual Conceptualisation Factor A: Idealised Q-Sort: Study 1

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Complex (51)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	Benefiting the individual (4)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)
Not needed (54)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	Gaining initial employment (14)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Benefitting the economy (7)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
Not my responsibility (59)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Securing any job (40)	A set of achievements (1)	Gaining work experience (12)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Benefitting the community (6)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	
		Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Maintaining employment (15)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)		
			Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)			
				A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	Being prepared for employment (11)				
					About the individuals characteristics (17)					
					Getting a graduate level job (41)					

Key:

Industry Focus

Higher Education Focus

Individual Focus

158

Figure 20 - Higher Education Conceptualisation Factor B: Idealised Q-Sort: Study 1

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Not my responsibility (59)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Benefitting the economy (7)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Maintaining employment (15)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
A tick box exercise (50)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	A set of achievements (1)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Being prepared for employment (11)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)
Not needed (54)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)
	Securing any job (40)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	
		Gaining initial employment (14)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)		
			Benefitting the community (6)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Complex (51)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)			
				A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)				
					The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)					
					The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)					

Key:

Industry Focus
Higher Education Focus
Individual Focus

Figure 21 – Industry Conceptualisation Factor C: Idealised Q-Sort: Study 1

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)
A tick box exercise (50)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Gaining initial employment (14)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	Complex (51)
Not needed (54)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	Being prepared for employment (11)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Gaining work experience (12)	Benefitting the community (6)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)
	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	Maintaining employment (15)	
		The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Benefitting the economy (7)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Benefiting the individual (4)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)		
			The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)			
				A set of achievements (1)	Not my responsibility (59)	Securing any job (40)				
					Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)					
					The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)					

Key:

Industry Focus

Higher Education Focus

Individual Focus

160

5.8 CONCLUSION

The findings from this study have highlighted the level of complexity in relation to Employability runs deeper than what is portrayed within literature. The 16 participants have varied views on how to define Employability, which is expected due to the concept being complex, but the impact of this is significant. The purpose of this thesis is to understand the perceptions of Employability from a view of students and understanding how these perceptions can impact on engagement. Literature discussed within the preceding chapters highlights student perceptions and engagement can be influenced and impacted by teaching staff (Gunn, 2018; Wood and Su, 2017; Willetts, 2015). Therefore, the emergence of these contextualisation's amongst a key stakeholder identified in the QAA model (2014) is not surprising due to 16 different viewpoints. However, when considering that the multiple messages relayed to students by multiple staff within the institutions from this study, the complex nature of the concept of Employability becomes even more complicated. In relation to the objective for this study:

- **Identify if there is a shared understanding and perception of Employability within and amongst relevant Higher Education Teaching Staff within Sport**

This objective has been achieved and has highlighted that there are grouped members of staff with a shared understanding and perception of Employability, whilst also highlighting that across these 16 participants, there are 3 distinct ways in which Employability is viewed.

5.9 THE STUDENT VOICE: MY VIEWS AS A RESEARCH STUDENT: STUDY 1

As voices of their institution, seeing that staff perceptions aligned in a similar way to those found within literature was not something I was surprised to find, considering the literature derives from academics who have a curiosity about the concept of Employability. A point that does concern me about this alignment is that the similarities are so clear that there appears

161

to be little room for any other considerations. When conducting the research, I did notice that most staff tried to draw on their experiences of working as an academic which of course was the purpose of the study, but it was interesting to see that there was no mention of if they were in the shoes of students. Speaking to different staff members who held different roles but who had equal interaction with the same cohort of students is something I found fascinating as some had very different perceptions but would be expected to contribute to the same Employability curriculum development within their institution. Even though I have stated the findings from this study did not surprise me, there also has to some consideration given to the time in which this data was collected. The data collected was done so in 2015 (7 years ago) so the perceptions of staff may well have changed if this study was conducted again with the same participants. Perhaps a future direction for studies of this nature is to take a longitudinal approach to data collected on staff and not just students. I would be interested to test theories such as the Self Concept Thoery by Super (1981) alongside those views to rationalise if there has been change in perceptions, why that might be.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY 2 FINDINGS

(STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYABILITY)

6.0 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous chapter the aim of this thesis is to develop an understanding of what Employability means to undergraduate sport students and assess how this may impact their engagement with Employability. This chapter, therefore, aims to reveal the Employability perceptions of students who are studying multiple disciplines across sport. The objective in which this chapter aims to address is objective 2, as set out within Chapter 1:

- **Explore undergraduate Sports Students knowledge and perceptions of Employability**

The way in which this study has been conducted is identical to that in Study 1, by utilising Q Methodology. As mentioned within preceding chapters, the subjective nature of the Employability as a concept, justifies Q Methodology as an ideal tool for exploring these subjective views.

As within study 1, the same 2 institutions were involved in this study with the only difference being the participant population as student perspectives became the focus for this study. The procedure for this study was almost identical to that in study 1 and the differences will be outlined in section 6.2. To remain consistent, the same Q sets, Q Sort Template and time was allocated to that within study 1.

The remainder of this chapter will disclose and interpret the findings from this study to explore undergraduate Sports Students knowledge and perceptions of Employability.

6.1 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND RATIONALE

The 39 participants chosen for this study were selected from 2 UK Higher Education institutions (HEI). 1 institution based in the Northwest of England, n=34 with the other in the Midlands, n=5. Table 19 provides information relating to the chosen participants, related to which institution they belong to and their chosen course of study.

As mentioned within the previous chapter during the time of data collection, my role as a member of staff at the university located in the Northwest meant that consideration needed to be given to my relationship with the participants. Within my role I had access to students across specific courses which are highlighted in Table 19. Therefore, to satisfy the requirements outlined to gain ethical approval, I ensured that all the participants within this study were not taught by myself prior to the commencement of the data collection.

As mentioned in Chapter 5 also, the university located in the Midlands was chosen based on a good relationship that had been built between a former supervisory team member and members of staff within the university located in the Midlands.

Appropriate sport courses from both institutions were identified based upon how Employability related content was delivered across the programmes. The courses highlighted in Table 19 included specific standalone Employability modules for the students, whilst the remainder embedded Employability content within context-based modules. Participants were randomly selected from each of these programmes. The rationale behind this was based on the assessment of whether embedded or standalone Employability related content impacted on student perceptions or engagement which will be highlighted in the final study (Chapter 7). Once the appropriate sport programmes had been identified across both institutions, I was invited to provide a brief overview of the purpose of my research in the hope of also gaining willing participants. For those interested, a participant information sheet and consent form were distributed (Appendix F and G). Participants were not obliged to take part in this research and were informed that if they chose not to take part, they could simply refuse to sign the consent form with no implications.

In the next section of this chapter, information will be provided to demonstrate the practices and procedures involved to collect the data for this study.

Table 19 - Study 2 Participants

Participant Identifier	HEI	Course Title	Gender
	(NW=North West, Mid = Midlands)		
1sm-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Management	M
2sm-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Management	F
3cd -NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
4cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
5cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
6cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
7cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
8cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
9cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
10cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
11cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
12cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
13c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
14c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
15c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
16c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
17c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
18c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	F
19c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
20c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
21c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
22c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
23c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	F
24c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
25c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
26c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
27st-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Studies	M
28st-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Studies	F
29ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	M
30ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	F
31ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	F
32ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	F
33ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	M
34ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	M
35cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
36cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
37cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
38cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
39cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M

6.2 STUDY 2 PROCEDURE

The main aim of this study is to explore objective 2 which was introduced within chapter 1 of this thesis. To ensure that this objective was achieved it was imperative to ensure the correct methodology (Q) and the execution of this methodology was accurate, as done so within study 1. Figure 22 highlights a basic outline to ensure that the practice of Q methodology was appropriate for this study.

Based upon the time I had with the students, I conducted the data collection based on programme cohorts. I was provided with an hour for each cohort in which I was able to set them up with a dedicated workspace to complete their individual Q-Sort. Another room was made available to conduct the post Q-Sort interviews individually after each participant had finished. As with the previous study, the time allocated for each group was 1 hour, but all the participants completed their Q-Sort within 40-45 minutes. As some of the groups were quite large, I ensured that the post Q-Sort interview did not exceed 15 minutes which seemed to be enough time for all the participants.

Figure 22 - Ensuring Q is Appropriate to meet Objective 2

Objective: Study 2		
Explore undergraduate Sports Students knowledge and perceptions of Employability.		

Q Methodology		
Q Sort (Explore initial perceptions)	Post Sort Interview (Assess knowledge by understanding Q sort distribution choices)	Factor Analysis (Analyse perceptions of Employability across the participants)
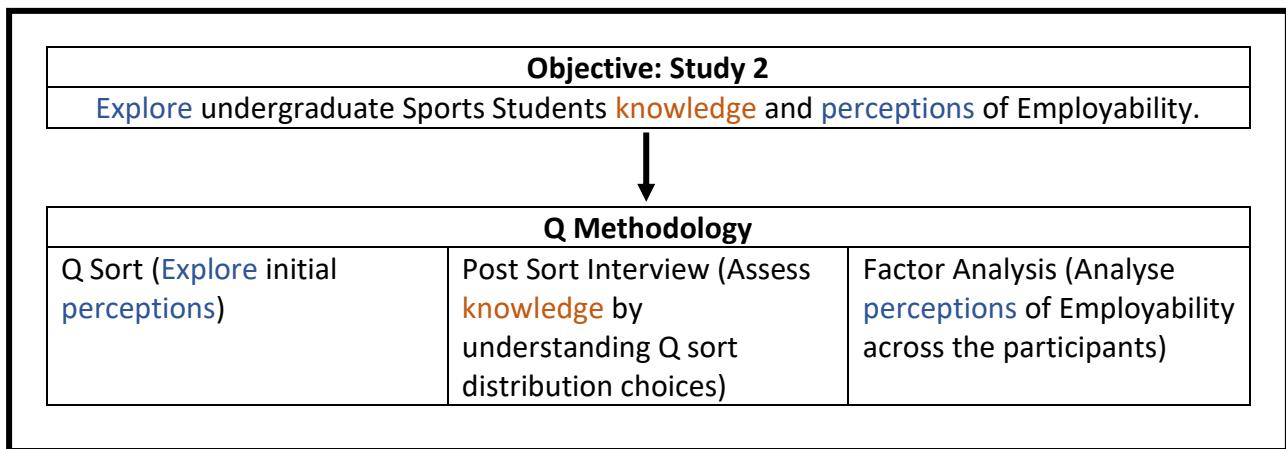
Prior to each Q-Sort being completed, alongside the signed consent forms, I also verbally checked with each participant to acknowledge their acceptance of their involvement in the study and informed them about how this data would be used.

The practices and procedures as mentioned within Chapter 5 (5.2.1 – 5.2.3) were also adopted for this study, but with some slight variation due to accessibility. As this study was being conducted per programme cohort, I was only able to offer them a workspace within a group setting, meaning each completed Q-Sort per programme was done so in the same room at the same time. The post Q-Sort interviews were conducted in the same way as those within study 1.

6.3 FINDINGS: FACTORS A, B AND C

Like the previous study, the findings from this study have presented 3 emergent factors within the data set. As with the previous study, the extraction of 3 factors highlights 3 distinct viewpoints in relation to Employability across the participants within this study. After completing the Centroid Factor Analysis followed by a varimax rotation for this study, 5 of the participants were not loaded against a particular factor, therefore a manual factor rotation was applied of -24 degrees. The manual rotation between factors 1 and 2 presented a different outlook on the loading of the 3 factors and following this, each participant was loaded onto a factor. The factor matrix as evidenced within table 20 demonstrates the number of factors that have emerged, and which participants are significant within each factor. Table 20 highlights significant factor loadings across the participants, highlighted in the table with 'X'. Based on the recommendations of Watts and Stenner (2012), each factor loading in this study far exceeds the minimum allocation to be deemed a significant factor, with no factor in this study being loaded with less than 10 participants. With the addition of the Eigenvalue exceeding 1.00 for each factor, adds further justification for the selection of 3 factors within this study. Table 21 demonstrates the correlation between the 3 emergent factors within this study.

Table 20 - The Factor Matrix: Study 2

	Factor		
Participant	A	B	C
1sm-NW	0.0351	0.1736	**0.5001X**
2sm-NW	0.1989	0.3101	**0.5646X**
3cd -NW	0.1655	0.2636	**0.4407X**
4cd-NW	0.3705	**0.5038X**	0.2396
5cd-NW	0.3589	**0.4793X**	0.0066
6cd-NW	**0.5767X**	0.2136	0.2297
7cd-NW	0.2567	**0.5837X**	0.2277
8cd-NW	**0.4901X**	0.3006	-0.0343
9cd-NW	**0.3846X**	0.2303	0.3002
10cd-NW	0.3583	**0.3897X**	0.0801
11cd-NW	-0.2616	**0.3909X**	-0.1071
12cd-NW	0.0603	0.2706	**0.3809X**
13c-NW	**0.4576X**	0.1109	0.4310
14c-NW	0.1237	0.2637	**0.3573X**
15c-NW	0.1966	**0.4348X**	0.1842
16c-NW	0.0529	-0.0238	**0.4239X**
17c-NW	**0.4711X**	0.1491	0.2110
18c-NW	0.4908	**0.5313X**	0.0697
19c-NW	-0.1323	0.1009	**0.5615X**
20c-NW	0.2268	**0.6132X**	0.1795
21c-NW	0.3553	**0.4606X**	-0.0542
22c-NW	0.2595	0.2582	**0.3512X**
23c-NW	**0.6122X**	0.2277	0.2495
24c-NW	-0.0989	**0.5783X**	0.2344
25c-NW	-0.1071	**0.4976X**	0.0428
26c-NW	-0.0102	**0.4526X**	0.3317
27st-NW	**0.4989X**	0.3966	0.1803

28st-NW	**0.3553X**	0.3094	0.1922
29ss-NW	**0.3400X**	0.2059	0.2876
30ss-NW	-0.0693	**0.2352X**	0.0894
31ss-NW	0.1915	**0.4672X**	0.3929
32ss-NW	**0.4529X**	0.0021	0.3600
33ss-NW	**0.4337X**	0.3566	0.3228
34ss-NW	0.4790	**0.5197X**	0.1939
35cd-MID	0.3926	0.2691	**0.5043X**
36cd-MID	0.2272	**0.5941X**	0.2480
37cd-MID	0.1046	**0.4401X**	0.2832
38cd-MID	-0.0284	0.3732	**0.3923X**
39cd-MID	0.2315	**0.3293X**	0.1041
Eigenvalue	10.08	1.66	1.49
Rotated % expl. Var	11	14	9

X = Significant Factor Loading

Table 21 - Correlations Between Factor Scores: Study 2

	A	B	C
A	1.00	0.64	0.59
B	0.64	1.00	0.61
C	0.59	0.61	1.00

As seen in Table 21 Factor A and B have the strongest correlation score of 0.64, closely followed by a correlation of similar strength between factors B and C at 0.61, before the weakest correlation is demonstrated at 0.59 between factors A and C. Although there are differences in the strength of correlation, they are all very close together in relation to strength, with only a difference of 0.05. In alignment with the work of Ratner (2021) Table 22 demonstrates correlation strength across the factors.

Table 22 – Factor Correlation Strength: Study 2

Combined Factors	Weak (0 – 0.29)	Moderate (0.30-0.70)	Strong (0.71-1.00)
A and B		0.64	
B and C		0.61	
C and A		0.59	

Although there are no 'strong' correlations in reference to the work by Ratner (2021), the consistency of a moderate correlation is an interesting find within this study, as not only have 3 factors emerged, but there is evidence to suggest that across these 3 factors there is a highly moderate relationship across them all, falling only just short of being classified as strong correlations. This will be explored further within the Chapter 8. Although it may be considered disappointing to not see a strong correlation between the factors, this does not deter away from the significance within the individual factors themselves.

In the upcoming sections of this chapter each factor will be explored to understand the views of the participants loaded against each. To understand these views, it is necessary to evaluate each factor based on the common understandings within them, and label them appropriately to define how the participants loaded within each factor perceive Employability.

Tables 23-25 demonstrate the distinguishing statements within each factor. These tables will assist in the labelling of each factor based on the shared views of the participants loaded against them.

6.3.1 FACTOR A: LABELLING

Labelling this factor has been determined by the statements that have been strongly agreed with and have therefore been placed alongside a positive Q sort value (Table 23). Although there are multiple statements that have been allocated a positive Q sort value, they do not

all share equal significance, but there is a common pattern amongst those statements with a z score above 1.00. The phrases/words highlighted in red signal a pattern of perception amongst those participants that have been classified as belonging to this factor. Comparisons and further evaluation will feature later in this chapter before moving into a more in-depth evaluation of the findings within this thesis holistically in Chapter 8. For those participants who have been classified as belonging to this factor there is an emergent pattern that indicates their perceptions strongly align with Employability focussing on the need of employers/industry. When comparing this to the literature within chapter 3 (section 3.1.1) this approach to Employability mirrors the views of multiple authors including DHFETE (2002) who state that an employer focussed approached to Employability needs to be considered when assessing perceptions. This is assessed in more detail in the research by Bridgstock (2009) who reported that Employability should be driven by a list of employer requirements and therefore bringing industry needs to the forefront of Employability. However, the research from Bridgstock does have an air of contradiction as she states that focussing purely on employer needs could hinder individual longevity and therefore adopting an approach of Employability with only an industry focus, could limit the potential career paths and transferability of individuals. Although the findings from this study within Factor A indicate a strong inclination towards an employer/industry approach, there are hints within the statements that there is still some awareness that falls outside of the need for employers. This implies that although the pattern of employer needs is strong in relation to Employability amongst these participants, there is a likelihood that these participants would not be closed off to the concept of Employability being focused on other areas also, such as individual requirements and needs. Based on the strengths of the positive statements for this factor, Factor A within this study has been labelled: **Employability is obtaining and maintaining employment by possessing qualities and attributes that employers specify.**

Table 23 - Factor A – Distinguishing Statements: Study 2

Statement No	Statement	Q-Sort Value	Z Score
15	Maintaining Employment	5	1.96
33	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required by the changing needs of employers	5	1.78
43	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment	4	1.33
49	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job	4	1.22
3	Being successful within a chosen occupation	4	1.10
57	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute	3	0.69
48	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies	2	0.68
30	More than the requirements of employers	2	0.56
45	The understanding that a degree is not the end of learning	2	0.56
32	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills	2	0.52
52	Holds different meanings for different people	1	0.44
29	More than the possession of generic skills	1	0.40
40	Securing any job	0	0.25
5	Benefiting the workforce	0	0.22
31	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process	0	0.22
25	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	0	0.19

4	Benefiting the individual	0	0.18
6	Benefiting the community	-1	-0.20
56	Important for higher education institutes	-2	-0.52
21	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts	-2	-0.58
26	A set of graduate attributes	-2	-0.58
16	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market	-3	-0.62
1	A set of achievements	-3	-0.85
53	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning	-3	-1.01
51	Complex	-3	-1.03
18	Dependent on the state of the labour market	-4	-1.20
27	The beliefs of a higher education institute	-4	-1.26
23	The responsibility of higher education institutes	-4	-1.62
55	Important for higher education institutes but not the student	-4	-1.70

Phrases relevant to labelling this factor

6.3.2 FACTOR B: LABELLING

To label this factor, consideration has been given to the distinguishing statements that have been assigned a z score of over 1.00 (Table 24). In alignment with how previous labels have been defined, key phrases/words have been highlighted to try and ascertain a common pattern of perception amongst the participants allocated to this factor (Table 24). For the participants listed within this factor there appears to be a mixed view on Employability with perceptions aligning to the role of Higher Education Institutes, the role of individuals themselves but also that Employability can hold different meanings for many people. When comparing this perspective to that within literature, there is a strong similarity to the views of Yorke (2006) who describe Employability as multifaceted, especially within the arena of Higher Education. The views of the participants within this factor are interesting when considering that there is a shared view focused on the criteria in which HEI's set for Employability. This will be explored further within the discussion chapter (Chapter 8) but based upon the research by Knight and Yorke (2006) they state that HEI's must create and build Employability frameworks that replicate the working world. This indicates that from a student perspective (Factor B participants) HEI's are perceived as setting Employability criteria, but literature states HEIs are merely the middlemen and the link to industry. Although the perceptions of Employability emerging from this factor indicate a steer towards a combined conceptualisation of individual and HEI focus, utilising the literature sheds a different light on how, beyond the surface there are other stakeholders impacting on this but clearly out of view of the participants within this study. As stated previously this will be explored further within Chapter 8. Based on the strengths of the positive statements for this factor, Factor B within this study has been labelled: **Employability is not a one size fits all concept and can be individualised based upon the required skills and attributes determined by HEI's.**

Table 24 - Factor B – Distinguishing Statements: Study 2

Statement No	Statement	Q-Sort Value	Z Score
52	Holds different meanings for different people	5	2.83
28	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute	4	1.44
40	Securing any job	4	1.42
26	A set of graduate attributes	4	1.40
53	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning	3	1.33
4	Benefitting the individual	3	0.76
1	A set of achievements	2	0.70
6	Benefiting the community	2	0.64
21	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts	2	0.59
18	Dependent on the state of the labour market	1	0.27
45	The understanding that a degree is not the end of learning	0	0.05
49	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job	-1	-0.38
11	Being prepared for employment	-2	-0.65
32	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills	-2	-0.73
31	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process	-3	-0.78

57	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute	-3	-0.90
15	Maintaining employment	-4	-1.42
59	Not my responsibility	-4	-1.44
16	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market	-4	-1.69
54	Not needed	-5	-2.06
48	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies	-5	-2.19

* Phrases relevant to labelling this factor

6.3.3 FACTOR C: LABELLING

The keywords/phrases that have determined how this factor should be labelled incorporates the need of individual awareness and appears to reflect the perception of Employability with consideration for individual mindset. Within Chapter 3 (3.1.3) there is evidence within literature that demonstrates a shift in the individualised concept of Employability and the participants within this study who have been categorised within this factor appear to share a similar view. When assessing the statements that have been allocated a Z score over 1.00 (Table 25), the keywords align with the research of Bridgstock (2009) Dacre-Pool and Sewell (2007); deGrip, Van loo and Sanders (2004) Knight and Yorke (2003) McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) Tomlinson (2007) Tomlinson (2012) and Trought (2012) who stated that Employability needed to look towards personal identity, individual mindset, proactiveness, attitude, willingness, self-belief and self-esteem. Although there is little evidence of mindset development within Employability practice, there is research to suggest this is important (Chapter 3). Incorporating the idea of mindset development also opens the door to specific theories and frameworks that can be utilised with the concept of Employability with more relevancy. These theories include Human Capital and Protean Career Theory and the relevance and relatability of these with Employability will be discussed in much more detail within Chapter 8. Based on the strengths of the positive statements for this factor, Factor C within this study has been labelled: **Employability is focussed on personal awareness of individual capability, attitude, and the realisation of potential with the understanding that based upon this, Employability can hold different meanings for everyone.**

Table 25 - Factor C – Distinguishing Statements: Study 2

Statement No	Statement	Q-Sort Value	Z Score
35	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives	5	2.40
34	The realisation of his/her potential in work	5	1.60
45	The understanding that a degree is not the end of learning	5	1.52
39	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual	4	1.51
52	Holds different meanings for different people	4	1.40
36	Obtaining meaningful employment	3	0.97
9	Self-awareness and reflection	3	0.96
31	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process	3	0.88
58	A marketing tool for higher education	2	0.86
44	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes	2	0.59
42	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating	2	0.57
49	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job	1	0.25
32	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills	0	0.11
13	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills	0	0.06
1	A set of achievements	0	-0.07

16	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market	0	-0.08
26	A set of graduate attributes	0	-0.10
57	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute	-1	-0.11
53	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning	-1	-0.13
15	Maintaining employment	-2	-0.64
6	Benefitting the community	-2	-0.66
18	Dependent on the state of the labour market	-3	-0.74
4	Benefitting the individual	-3	-0.77
14	Gaining initial employment	-4	-0.96
48	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies	-4	-0.99
21	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts	-4	-1.31
40	Securing any job	-4	-1.42

* Phrases relevant to labelling this factor

6.4 FACTOR A

"Employability is obtaining and maintaining employment by possessing qualities and attributes that employers specify"

Within this section Factor A for this study will be examined in closer detail to develop a further understanding of the perception of Employability from those participants who have been categorised into this factor. To add further context to these findings, comments that emerged via the post Q-Sort interviews will be included to add context and enhance the richness of the data recorded. The emergent shared view of the participants within Factor A indicate an emphasis on industry being a key stakeholder when it comes to driving what is required on an individual basis from an Employability perspective. From the analysis, an idealised Q-Sort has been produced to show the views of a 'typical' participant loaded against this factor (Figure 23).

When evaluating the idealised Q-Sort (Figure 23) it is indicative of the label that has been created to represent those within this factor, however, there are some contradictions. Statement 30, which is located under column '2' deviates from the label given to this factor and implies that Employability is more than the requirements of employers. The fact this has been placed under column '2' shows that it is seen a positive viewpoint of agreement, but this is only an idealised Q-Sort, so is not reflective of each individual perspective. To understand each individual viewpoint, the post Q-Sort views are important. When comparing the results of this factor there is an alignment between the views of the participants belonging to factor A and views throughout literature. This is evident when noting the views of Flanders (1995) and DHFETE (2002) who state that Employability is the ability to secure and function in any job and the concept of Employability should be built around the needs of the intended employment sector.

Figure 23 - Idealised Q-Sort – Factor A: Study 2

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	Gaining initial employment (14)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Maintaining employment (15)
Not my responsibility (59)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	A set of achievements (1)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Securing any job (40)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	Gaining work experience (12)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
Not needed (54)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Being prepared for employment (11)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Complex (51)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	
		Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)		
			Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Benefitting the economy (7)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)			
				Benefitting the community (6)	Benefiting the individual (4)					
					Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)					
					The possession of basic core skills (47)					

182

These views are shared by participant 8cd-nw who provided the following quote:

> 22. *"There are always jobs there, even if you don't like doing it. You just have to get on with it. If I need a job, then I need to have what the employer is looking for" (8cd-nw)*

This statement from participant 8cd-nw sits with some of the views of Bridgstock (2009) who reported that Employability as a concept can be driven by a list of employer requirements and therefore bringing industry into the Employability driving seat. Further comments from other participants added to this view also:

> 23. *"Getting a job is important and for me Employability is about that, no matter what it is" (13c-nw)*

> 24. *If you understand the sector that you want to enter, then you can make sure you have the skills to secure employment" (28st-nw)*

There is a hint of some awareness around the role of individuals within quote 24 when noting the use of phrases such as "if YOU understand" "YOU can make sure YOU have the skills". This indicates a slight awareness of a relational conceptualisation of Employability between the individual and industry. Evidence of a relational conceptualisation is also demonstrated in the idealised Q-Sort (figure 23), specifically in statements 33,2 and 49 which have been positioned under columns 4 and 5 on the Q-Sort. Although the information provided by some of the participants demonstrate a largely industry focussed approach to Employability, the introduction of individual awareness shows for those participants, there is more to consider when it comes to Employability. However, in contrast some of the comments made by the participants seemed vague and ambiguous:

> 25. *Experience is important, it means I am more employable and will increase my chances of getting my foot in the door" (6cd-nw).*

Although the statement provided by participant 6cd-nw (quote 25) is not untrue according to Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert (2020) who agree that experience is vital within the concept of Employability and building experience improves employment chances, there is a vagueness to this response. Participant 6cd-nw uses the word employable and did not mention Employability and this was a pattern amongst those listed within factor A. As mentioned within the preceding chapters of this thesis, Employability is complex and adding to those complexities are the use of interchangeable words such as employment, employable and Employability (Romgens, Scoupe and Beauseart, 2020). The misuse of difference when it came to understanding these words became apparent during the post Q-Sort interviews with the participants loaded against this factor. An example of this is the quote provided by participant 9cd-nw:

> *26. Employment or Employability (whatever it's called) is the ultimate aim for me, so to achieve this isn't about anything more than the requirements of employers and how I match that. Employment is Employability" (9cd-nw).*

This was further evidenced when interviewing participant 32ss-nw who when asked about statement number 17 (about the individuals characteristics) which was placed under column -5 for this participant responded with:

> *27. "Well, when you go for a job I don't believe a person's characteristics come across and be the sole reason why someone may or may not be given that job" (32ss-nw).*

The response from participant 32ss-nw, highlighted that the understanding of individual characteristics have been assigned to securing a job, therefore implying that this participant was focussed on the term employment rather than Employability. When comparing this response to the evolution of Employability outlined in the work by Gazier (1998b) this perception of Employability seems to sit between dichotomic and socio-medical Employability. The work by Gazier evidenced that the concept of Employability evolved through the consideration of additional factors over a substantial period, but the responses given from some of the participants in this factor, appear to align with the very early

understandings of Employability and the way in which Employability is used as an interchangeable term.

To assess how each statement has been placed and how this relates back to the original statements found within the concourse, it is important to ascertain whether statements that share their place of origin have been clustered together on the idealised Q-Sort. Figure 24 demonstrates the idealised Q-Sort for this factor using colour codes to show statements that emerged from the same original statements within literature. Although this will be elaborated on further within Chapter 8, there are some obvious patterns of emergence within figure 24. Like the findings within study 1 there are some tight clusters but there are also some that are widely spread across the entire Q-Sort. This once again signifies that the level of agreement between the participants and the literature does not completely align and that although there are aspects in which participants agree with, they also disagree with aspects of that same statement of origin. The dissected Q-Sort (figure 24) will be discussed alongside others from this study within the discussion chapter (chapter 8) to compare the similarities and disparities across each factor that has emerged from within this study.

Figure 24 - Idealised Q-Sort Factor A – Q Set Dissection: Study 2

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	Gaining initial employment (14)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Maintaining employment (15)
Not my responsibility (59)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	A set of achievements (1)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Securing any job (40)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	Gaining work experience (12)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
Not needed (54)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Being prepared for employment (11)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Complex (51)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	
		Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)		
			Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Benefitting the economy (7)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)			
				Benefitting the community (6)	Benefiting the individual (4)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)				
					Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)					
					The possession of basic core skills (47)					

NB: Shared colours represent statements that originate from the same literature source.

186

6.5 FACTOR B

***"Employability is not a one size fits all concept and can be individualised based upon the
required skills and attributes determined by HEI's"***

To understand the meaning behind the labelling of this factor, statements will be provided
from those participants categorised within Factor B. As this chapter is presenting findings, a
more thorough discussion will be provided within the discussion chapter (Chapter 8). To
facilitate the comments alongside these findings an idealised Q-Sort is provided (Figure 25).

As can be seen in the idealised Q-Sort (figure 25) there are several statements on the
far right (positive) side of the Q-Sort which mention skills and attributes as being an aspect of
agreement when it comes to Employability perceptions amongst those participants who fall
into this factor. When assessing the comments of the participants within factor B, this
becomes even more apparent.   Quote 28 is from participant 18c-nw, who explained their
views on skills in relation to Employability.

28 "The skills you possess will enable you to be efficient within employment" (18c-nw).

Similar shared views can be found in the upcoming quotes provided.

*29. "If we don't have skills or knowledge, then we cannot be employed. Skills are
needed but the use of the term 'basic' implies that only a minimum number of skills is
sufficient. Skills are not only vital in securing employment, but also ensure you keep it.
(15c-nw).*

*30. "Employability for me is about having a wide range of skills in order to show that I
am employable" (34ss-nw).*

*31 "Understanding my skills is important for me, as I can then use this to align my
skillsets to the type of job I am looking to secure" (37cd-mid)*

Figure 25 - Idealised Q-Sort – Factor B: Study 2

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	Maintaining employment (15)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Benefitting the economy (7)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Gaining initial employment (14)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)
Not needed (54)	Not my responsibility (59)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	A set of achievements (1)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Securing any job (40)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	Gaining work experience (12)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)
	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Benefitting the community (6)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	
		Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Being prepared for employment (11)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Benefiting the individual (4)		
			Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)			
				Self-awareness and reflection (9)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	Complex (51)				
					The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)					
					The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)					

188

Quote 28-31 share a similar view when it comes to addressing the consideration of skills in relation to the concept of Employability. This view is further elaborated by participant 3ss-nw (quote 32) but with some additional consideration being given to the transferability of skills and the need for awareness of adaptation.

32 "I feel with Employability that understanding of changing situations is important to make sure that job security is not taken for granted. Adaptability for me is important" (3ss-nw).

The awareness of transferability is also apparent within the following statement provided by participant 5cd-nw, but there is also evidence of how this participant has considered the role of universities and how higher education plays a part in this.

33. "I recognise that other aspects of my university life can assist in highlighting and developing my skills and showing they are transferable. For example, I anticipate that my social skills will develop at university and not just from being in a classroom environment, but via the social interactions I have as part of life as a student". (5cd-nw).

This is further elaborated on with comments provided from participants 36cd-mid and 7cd-nw (quotes 34 and 35) who mention how they feel the role of universities steer the pathway of Employability needs.

34 "I feel encouragement from my university to develop skills and learn about new things will help me with my Employability" (36cd-mid).

35 "The skills that are highlighted for development by my university will allow me to become a better coach when the time comes" (7cd-nw).

Although the role of universities have been mentioned within the commentary of some of the participants loaded onto this factor, there is still an awareness of how a need for individual

accountability is important. This can be evidenced in the quotes below from participants 6ss-nw and 36cd-mid (quotes 36 and 37).

36 "My chances of finding a job and the ways in which I do that have to be my responsibility. I do believe that university will help me by informing me what I need to be better with, but I am equally responsible. I do also believe that if I can be viewed as employable and am successful then this also enhances the institutes reputation". (6ss-nw)

37 "It is not the responsibility of universities to get a job, but it is their responsibility to let me know what skills I need to work on so my chances of getting a job improve" (36cd-mid)

Although there are similar views shared within quotes 36 and 37, there are some notable differences. In one instance there is the mention of what universities can gain from enhancing student Employability, and this is clearly recognised amongst undergraduate students. Within quote 37 an interesting comment is made in relation to responsibility and although this participant does not state that Employability is the responsibility of universities, they do believe that the direction of Employability needs for students, should be driven by the institution.   Although there is a consensus on the role of higher education in relation to the concept of Employability, the awareness of individual responsibility and ownership is a theme that is also prevalent, as evidenced in quotes 38 and 39.

38 "Employability is about understanding how it works for you as an individual" (4cd-nw).

39 "Employability is about understanding yourself as this is the start of assessing what you do well and what you need to do better" (37cd-mid).

Although the awareness of individual ownership is apparent in the quotes 38 and 39, this is still apparent within quote 40 but with a different take on the role of how individual traits and personality can also play a role within the concept of Employability.

40 "I am responsible for obtaining my own qualifications, but I also believe that Employability is more than getting a degree, personality is important, and I am a believer that this plays a huge part alongside how you treat others" (10cd-nw).

The pattern of awareness in relation to individual responsibility continues within the statements provided by those labelled against factor B. In the upcoming quotes although the focus of the commentary is individual ownership, there is a hint of how this can then translate into employment. The use of terms such as 'employment' and 'job' have started to become interchangeable within the narratives and there appears to be a fluidity in the way in which these words are used when referring to Employability.

41 "It is my responsibility to get the knowledge to get employed and for me to put the effort in" (15c-nw).

42 "It is my responsibility to get a job, no one else's" (7cd-nw).

43 "If I want to gain employment then it is down to me to find this" (31ss-nw).

Referring to 'employment' is somewhat expected within the context of Employability, but there appears to be confusion or perhaps lack of understanding amongst some Factor B participants when it comes to differentiating the terms employment and Employability. As mentioned within Chapter 4 (section 4.7.3) participants were given instructions when conducting the research and advised that the purpose of this study was understand their perceptions on Employability. The following statements highlight how Employability has been easily interchanged with the terms 'employment' and 'employed' and how the use of these terms impacts on their perceptions of Employability.

44 "Getting employment is needed, as you need to get paid because without money, you can't do anything in life" (18c-nw).

45 "It's needed to live" (31ss-nw).

46 "If you aren't employed, then life becomes very difficult" (36cd-mid).

The way in which Employability has been perceived as the same as employment, indicates that this perspective shapes the way in which Employability is viewed from these individuals. As an example, quote 45 is far removed from literature around the concept of Employability, but if looking at 'employment' this statement holds more validity. This therefore highlights that understanding that there is a difference between Employability and employment is very important, as a shift in understanding can alter perspective.

The terms used within literature could add or be the cause to this confusion, so it is important to ascertain within this research how the statements used within this study have been placed in relation to the origins of source. Figure 26 highlights the dissection of statements in relation to the idealised Q-Sort for this factor. As explained within earlier sections, the colours indicate statements that originate from the same source and therefore showing a level of agreement/disagreement with aspects of literature statements as appose to the entirety of a statement. Like Factor A, there is a pattern in relation to statements 54 and 59 which once again have been clustered towards the disagreement (-5 and -4) end of the Q-Sort. In relation to statement clustering elsewhere on the Q-Sort there doesn't appear to be an obvious pattern emerging. The lack of colour coded clustering signals how the participants perspective of Employability do not wholly agree with statements that are written within literature when it comes to the concept of Employability. The apparent non clustering as evidenced within Figure 26 adds to notion of Employability being complex and therefore adding to the views of Forrier and Sels (2003) that defining Employability is complex.

Figure 26 - Idealised Q-Sort Factor B – Q Set Dissection: Study 2

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	Maintaining employment (15)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Benefitting the economy (7)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Gaining initial employment (14)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)
Not needed (54)	Not my responsibility (59)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	A set of achievements (1)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Securing any job (40)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	Gaining work experience (12)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)
		Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Benefitting the community (6)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)
			Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Being prepared for employment (11)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Benefiting the individual (4)
				Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)
					Self-awareness and reflection (9)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	Complex (51)
						The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)
						The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)

NB: Shared colours represent statements that originate from the same literature source.

193

6.6 FACTOR C

"Employability is focussed on personal awareness of individual capability, attitude,

and the realisation of potential with the understanding that based upon this,

Employability can hold different meanings for everyone".

As with the previous format of this chapter, understanding the labelling of this factor will be demonstrated via the comments provided by the participants loaded against this factor. Like the points mentioned in previous sections, as this is a findings chapter, a more thorough discussion will be included within Chapter 8 to pull together the entirety of the findings from this thesis. An idealised Q-Sort has been provided for Factor C (Figure 27) to show a typical response for those labelled against this factor.

As evidenced within Table 25 (section 6.3.3) the statements that have been classified as significant to this factor and have been positioned on the side of agreement on the participant Q-Sorts (right side of the Q-Sort), highlight the perception of Employability as being individually focussed but with more emphasis on personal and self-awareness. This has been further emphasised with the quote provided by participant 1sm-nw within quote 47.

> *47. "Employability is the awareness of knowing how to develop whilst working rather than feeling that once a job is obtained, Employability has been fulfilled. Employability is about personal development and understanding that acquiring a job does not mean you are the finished article. Higher Education can help with this to an extent, but it is about the individual" (1sm-nw).*

Additional points that echo those views of participant 1sm-nw can be found within quote 48 who elaborates on the need for ensuring skills and personal development are at the forefront of individual mindsets to remain current and contemporary in their chosen industry.

Figure 27 - Idealised Q-Sort – Factor C: Study 2

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	Gaining initial employment (14)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	Being prepared for employment (11)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
Not my responsibility (59)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)
Not needed (54)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Benefitting the economy (7)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)
	Securing any job (40)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Complex (51)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	
		Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Maintaining employment (15)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)		
			Benefitting the community (6)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	A set of achievements (1)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)			
				Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)				
					A set of graduate attributes (26)					
					Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)					

48. "With Employability it is important to not be complacent and want to continually learn and develop otherwise you can get left behind and maybe can't keep up with the pace of the industry you are part of" (2sm-nw).

When comparing quotes 47 and 48 to the idealised Q-Sort (Figure 27) the statements provided in these quotes align to the statements positioned on the positive side (right side) of the Q-Sort. There is a strong pattern of personal awareness, realisation and understanding amongst the statements in which these participants agree with. This is evidenced in the following quotes:

49. "If you have come to university, and if you have applied for that job, then you need to be proactive to increase your chances of being successful. Committing to university should already be an initial indication of your commitment to enhancing your Employability so in a way there is a level of proactiveness already there but ultimately you get out what you put in" (2sm-nw).

50. "Attitude and willingness is a key part of Employability in my opinion as this is needed as the first step towards anything" (12cd-nw)

51. "An awareness of going above and beyond expectations, signals how serious someone is taking Employability, like a job description there are essential and desirable criteria', if someone is serious about their Employability then they will be working towards achieving all those additional desirable criteria' in order to stand out above others" (2sm-nw).

52. "Employers may advertise what they want and you may have these but that doesn't set you apart from anyone else. This is the point where individual qualities and characteristics start to become more important, these are what differentiate ones Employability to another" (22c-nw).

53. "Education can only take you so far, it can give you the foundations to build on but more is needed from me" (14c-nw).

Although there is an apparent awareness of the need for personal awareness, similar to the participants within Factor B, there appears to be some confusion around the terminology. Some of the participants within this factor infer that Employability and employment are one in the same and this is evident in the following comments:

54. "You can't rely on someone else to get employed, you need to go out and do this yourself" (22c-nw).

55. "For me it's something to do, it can bring enjoyment but also funds what you need from life" (35cd-mid).

56. "It is needed to pay for things, seems quite an obvious question really that employment is needed" (38cd-mid).

57. "You don't go to work to reflect, you go to work and earn a living. Employability is needed to afford things" (3cd-nw)

The comments made within quotes 54-57 are referring to employment rather than Employability. Across both Factors B and C, this seems to be a common occurrence and could be seen to justify the complexities and confusion that therefore seem to be surrounding the concept of Employability. The terms used within literature could add or be the cause to this confusion, so it is important to ascertain within this research how the statements used within this study have been placed in relation to the origins of source. Figure 28 highlights the dissection of statements in relation to the idealised Q-Sort for this factor. As explained within earlier sections, the colours indicate statements that originate from the same source and therefore showing a level of agreement/disagreement with aspects of literature statements as appose to the entirety of a statement. The areas of agreement/disagreement with the entirety of statements originating from the same source will be discussed in depth within Chapter 8. As previously stated the findings within this study will be discussed in more detail within the discussion chapter of this thesis (Chapter 8), this will include comparing each factor across this study with the rest of the findings throughout this thesis.

Figure 28 - Idealised Q-Sort Factor C – Q Set Dissection: Study 2

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	Gaining initial employment (14)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	Being prepared for employment (11)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
Not my responsibility (59)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)
Not needed (54)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Benefitting the economy (7)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)
	Securing any job (40)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Complex (51)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	
		Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Maintaining employment (15)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)		
			Benefitting the community (6)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	A set of achievements (1)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)			
				Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)				
					A set of graduate attributes (26)					
					Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)					

NB: *Shared colours represent statements that originate from the same literature source.*

198

6.7 COMPARING FACTORS A.B AND C

As with the findings within study 1, differences in perception are expected, therefore the emergence of 3 factors is not surprising. As with study 1, the emergent factors portray 3 distinctly different viewpoints in relation to the concept of Employability. Unlike study 1, the 3 emergent factors do not align fully with the QAA model (2014) and therefore offering a different take on Employability than the findings within study 1.

In alignment with a constructivist approach the different viewpoints are important to understand how the concept of Employability is seen through the eyes of individuals, or in this case; students. In preparation for further discussion within Chapter 8, table 26 shows the breakdown of participant factor loading in relation to the courses they study and the institution to which they belong.

The importance of showing the demographical split of the participants will allow for the upcoming discussion within chapter 8 to consider the differences that could impact on why each participant is loaded against a certain factor. For example, the participants who study Sports Management have been loaded against the same factor, further exploration of why this might be, will be included within Chapter 8. To add further understanding, the numbers highlighted within table 26 represent participants who are taught Employability related content as a standalone module therefore adding another element to consider when assessing these findings in more depth within the discussion chapter.

The impact of these different viewpoints will be considered in detail within the concluding chapter of this thesis (Chapter 8).

Reverting to the 3 factors within this study, table 27 demonstrates what each factor represents and highlights any similarities that have emerged across the factors.

Table 26 - Participant Factor Loading per Course and Institution: Study 2

	Factor A					Factor B					Factor C				
	SM	SCD	SC	ST	SS	SM	SCD	SC	ST	SS	SM	SCD	SC	ST	SS
University 1 (NW)	0	3	3	2	3	0	5	7	0	3	2	2	4	0	0
University 2 (MID)	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A

SM = Sports Management, SCD = Sports Coaching and Development, SC = Sports Coaching, ST = Sports Studies, SS = Sports Science

Table 27 - The Conceptualisations of Factors A, B and C: Study 2

	Label	Conceptualisation	Similarities
Factor A	Employability is obtaining and maintaining employment by possessing qualities and attributes that employers specify	Industry	Agreement across all the factors that Employability is a concept that is needed and is not perceived as a tick box exercise
Factor B	Employability is not a one size fits all concept and can be individualised based upon the required skills and attributes determined by HEIs	Individual x Higher Education	
Factor C	Employability is focussed on personal awareness of individual capability, attitude and the realisation of potential with the understanding that based upon this, Employability can hold different meanings for everyone	Individual	

The most significant similarity that was captured across each factor was that Employability is a requirement and that it is not perceived as a tick box exercise, which is a shared view across study 1 also. The findings of 3 emerging conceptualisations can also be explored using the idealised Q-Sorts for each factor by highlighting which conceptualisation each statement originated from. Figures 29-31 outline the idealised Q-Sorts for each factor when considering the emergent contextualisation's that have become evident through this study. Utilising figures 29-31 there is a clear difference from a contextual perspective about how the statements have been constructed.

There is evidence of clustering across each of the 3 figures. Although figure 29 is showing 1 obvious statement classified as industry focused the wording across the analysis for this factor also indicated a strong opinion with an industry focus. It could be suggested that labelling Factor A with an industry focus is incorrect, but the comments provided by those who are loaded against this factor justify the labelling. Figures 30 and 31 represent accurate clustering to justify the label for these factors, although this will be explored in depth within Chapter 8. Figures 19-21 will be discussed further within Chapter 8 to provide a platform of discussion about how the factors align to literature.

Figure 29 – Industry Conceptualisation Factor A: Idealised Q-Sort: Study 2

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	Gaining initial employment (14)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Maintaining employment (15)
Not my responsibility (59)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	A set of achievements (1)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Securing any job (40)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	Gaining work experience (12)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
Not needed (54)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Being prepared for employment (11)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Complex (51)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	
	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)			
			Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Benefitting the economy (7)	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	The knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)			
				Benefitting the community (6)	Benefiting the individual (4)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)				
					Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)					
					The possession of basic core skills (47)					

Key:

Industry Focus
Higher Education Focus
Individual Focus

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	Maintaining employment (15)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Benefitting the economy (7)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Gaining initial employment (14)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)
Not needed (54)	Not my responsibility (59)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	A set of achievements (1)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Securing any job (40)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	Gaining work experience (12)	A set of graduate attributes (26)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)
	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Benefitting the community (6)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	
		Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Being prepared for employment (11)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Benefiting the individual (4)		
			Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)			
				Self-awareness and reflection (9)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	Complex (51)				
					The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)					
					The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)					

Key:

Industry Focus
Higher Education Focus
Individual Focus

Figure 31 - Individual Conceptualisation Factor C: Idealised Q-Sort: Study 2

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
A tick box exercise (50)	Gaining initial employment (14)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	Being prepared for employment (11)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
Not my responsibility (59)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)
Not needed (54)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Benefitting the economy (7)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)
	Securing any job (40)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	Complex (51)	The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	
		Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Maintaining employment (15)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)		
			Benefitting the community (6)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	A set of achievements (1)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)			
				Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)		Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)			
					A set of graduate attributes (26)					
					Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)					

Key:

Industry Focus
Higher Education Focus
Individual Focus

6.8 CONCLUSION

The emergence of 3 factors from this study demonstrate the differences in Employability perception and although there is some alignment with literature, the findings from this study do not provide clarity to the ever-present complexities of Employability.   The purpose of this thesis is to understand the perceptions of Employability from a view of students and understanding how these perceptions can impact on engagement.   Considering that these students are brand new to university and their perceptions already differ significantly, adds to complexities of the concept but also raises questions around making sure that Employability is delivered effectively to all, regardless of perceptions.   Although Chapter 8 will discuss the comparisons across all studies within this thesis, there is already an emergence of disparity across the views of those within study 1 (staff) and of those in this study (students). In relation to the objective for this study:

- **Explore undergraduate Sports Students knowledge and perceptions of Employability**

This objective has been achieved and has highlighted that there are shared viewpoints in relation to the perception of Employability, whilst also highlighting that across these 39 participants, there are 3 distinct ways in which Employability is viewed.

6.9 THE STUDENT VOICE: MY VIEWS AS A RESEARCH STUDENT: STUDY 2

The findings from this study did somewhat surprise me and I expected a flipped version of findings between study 1 and 2. I was surprised as the findings in this study indicated that the participants showed an awareness of individual accountability across 2 of the 3 factors that emerged from this study and therefore highlighting an awareness that could be expected to be developed over time as appose to already being embedded at the start of their university journey. Knowing the findings that emerged from study 1, I was worried for the participants within this study in relation to whether their perceptions of Employability would

change and be moulded to the views of the staff participants within study 1. Although change is expected and is no bad thing, potentially being steered away from personal accountability is perhaps a step backwards in relation to the concept of Employability being an evolving one. The luxury of completing a 3rd and final longitudinal study will be able to address some of my concerns and assess if participant perception changed and if so was this in a positive or negative direction, but perhaps more importantly, what prompted that change. In hindsight, I wish someone would of offered me the same opportunity to be part of a research project like this when I was an undergraduate as I am intrigued to see what the analysis would have said about my views as a student.

CHAPTER 7: STUDY 3 FINDINGS

(GRADUATE PERCEPTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH EMPLOYABILITY)

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will highlight the findings from the final study within this thesis. Although this chapter, like the ones preceding will include findings from utilising Q Methodology, there is an additional aspect to this part of the thesis. Unlike the preceding chapters, which included information of snapshot data, this study has enabled an element of reflective data to be captured. The participants included within this study also feature within study 2, allowing for a reflective account of their student journey to be captured as they become graduates. The aim of this thesis is not only to capture perspectives on Employability, but to ascertain Employability engagement levels. This chapter therefore adds a longitudinal aspect to this thesis and aims to capture Employability perspectives from those in study 2 who have now become graduates and how they feel they engaged with Employability whilst being an undergraduate student. The objective in which this chapter aims to address is objective 4, as set out within Chapter 1:

- **Investigate the key influences on undergraduate student engagement with Employability throughout their student journey**

This study has been split into 2 parts; Q Methodology (graduate perspective of Employability) and semi-structured interviews (reflective account on student engagement).

Unlike the previous study (study 2), only students from the Northwest university were invited to be part of this final phase of the research. The reason for only allowing the students who were enrolled at the university in the Northwest to take part was due to the accessibility I had, as a researcher to maintain relationships with that group of students throughout their entire academic journey. The student journey can be complex and therefore this did affect the number of students included in this study as not all the participants included within study 2 completed their degree within the expected 3-year period and therefore could not be included within study 3.

The remainder of this chapter will disclose the findings from this study to investigate the key influences on undergraduate student engagement with Employability throughout their student journey.

7.1 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND RATIONALE

The potential number of participants for this study was 34 (Northwest HEI students) but as mentioned in the introductory section, not all 34 completed their studies or maintained relationships to be part of this final phase. Therefore a significantly reduced number of participants decided to be part of the final study to understand the role of Employability on their student journey and assess their perspective of Employability since becoming a graduate, n=8. Fortunately, Watts and Stenner (2012) state that large participant numbers are not required to sustain a good Q Methodological study. The details of the 8 participants involved in this study can be found in table 28. In keeping with study 2, the courses highlighted in red signifies standalone Employability modules as part of these programmes, compared to non-highlighted courses who embed Employability into other subject based modules.

During the data collection phase of this study, I was no longer a member of staff with the Northwest university so my interactions with these participants were historic and not current.

Table 28 - Study 3 Participants

Participant Identifier	Course Title	Gender
2sm-NW	BA (Hons) Sports Management	F
6cd-NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
7cd-NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
15c-NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
19c-NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
22c-NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
27st-NW	BA (Hons) Sports Studies	M
31ss-NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	F

Obtaining consent from the participants during study 2 included consent for the entire research, therefore I reached out to each participant who was eligible for study 3 to ask them if they would be interested in helping me complete the research. Some responded but with no commitment to be part of the study, some did not respond at all, some refused and 8 agreed and committed to the research. The consent forms for those who took part in this phase in the research can be found in Appendix G.

In the next section of this chapter, information will be provided to demonstrate the practices and procedures involved to collect the data for study 3.

7.2 STUDY 3 PROCEDURE

The main aim of this study is to explore objective 4 which was introduced within chapter 1 of this thesis. To ensure that this objective was achieved it was imperative to keep consistency with the previous studies but also to include a relevant tool to capture information relating to engagement. To understand perceptions of Employability Q Methodology was utilised as with the previous studies but with amendments made to the post Q-Sort interview. To use time effectively the post Q-Sort interviews intertwined with a semi-structured interview to capture views on Employability engagement. As mentioned within Chapter 4, the need for post Q-Sort interviews is not a compulsory aspect of Q Methodology but is encouraged due to the validity it can bring. The flexibility of how Q Methodology is used allowed me to embed the semi-structured interview within the post Q-Sort interview. Figure 32 highlights a basic outline to ensure that the practice of Q methodology alongside a semi-structed interview was appropriate to meet the objective set for this study. The Q Methodology aspect of this study was conducted in an almost identical way to that in study 2. The same materials were used across all studies in relation to Q Methodology. Unlike study 2 were all participants completed their Q-Sorts in the same room at the same time, in this study each participant was allocated a timeslot to complete the Q-Sort in a room on their own and in preparation for the interview. Once each participant had completed their Q-Sort, the semi-structured interview began. These interviews were audio recorded in preparation for transcription (Appendix J).

Figure 32 – Ensuring appropriate methods were used for Objective 4

Objective: Study 4		
Investigate the key influences on undergraduate student engagement with Employability throughout their student journey		

↓

Q Methodology		
Q Sort (Comparative Q-Sort against Study 2, provides a foundation for discussion)	Post Sort Interview (Assess perception differences from previous Q-Sort to ascertain whether this is a key influence on engagement)	Factor Analysis (Investigate the differences between Q-Sorts and how this aligns to data from semi-structured interview)

↓

Semi-Structured Interview	
Using the Q-Sort, investigate whether Employability perceptions were a key influence on their engagement with Employability throughout their student journey.	

7.3 FINDINGS: FACTOR A

Unlike the previous studies, there was only one emergent factor from this study. Although there is only 1 emergent factor, this indicates that for those participants included within this study, they now have similar perspectives about the concept of Employability. There is an outlier amongst the group which can be seen in Table 29 who has not been loaded against factor A (27st-nw). Due to this participant being detached from a factor, a varimax rotation was performed but this resulted in fewer participants loaded against Factor A and an increase in participants becoming detached from the factor. Manual rotations were tested using multiple degrees of rotation, but this made little difference to the unrotated factor analysis but subsequently resulted in a significant reduction in eigenvalues and therefore reducing the significance of Factor A. A decision was therefore made to leave factors unrotated. The factor matrix as evidenced within table 29 demonstrates the emergent factor and which participants have been loaded against this. Table 29 highlights significant factor loading across the participants, highlighted in the table with 'X'. As within study 2, based on the

recommendations of Watts and Stenner (2012), the factor loading in this study exceeds an Eigenvalue of 1.00 therefore deeming the factor, significant. Although there is research by Damio (2018) suggesting that each factor must have at least 10 participants loaded, this contradicts the words of Watts and Stenner (2012) who suggest that a large sample size is not needed for a good Q methodology study, therefore inciting that some studies may have less than 10 participants in total. The significance of only 1 emergent factor is not as important as within the previous studies, as Q Methodology serves a different purpose in this study as it does in the preceding ones. In this study Q-Methodology has been used to add context to discussions regarding Employability engagement.

Table 29 - The Factor Matrix: Study 3

	Factor
Participant	A
2sm-NW	**0.7490X**
6cd-NW	**0.6106X**
7cd-NW	**0.5552X**
15c-NW	**0.6167X**
19c-NW	**0.7172X**
22c-NW	**0.4533X**
27st-NW	0.3432
31ss-NW	**0.6025X**
Eigenvalue	2.9723
Rotated % expl. Var	37

X = Significant Factor Loading

As there is only 1 emergent factor this excludes the need to address correlations between factors and assess the strength of correlations.

7.3.1 FACTOR A: LABELLING

The statements highlighted in table 30 are indicative of shared beliefs in relation to Employability for those loaded within this factor. Although there are multiple statements that could be used to label this factor, there are some patterns that indicate how these individuals view Employability. When utilising the statements in red within table 30 there are distinct views of individual awareness, understanding skills and qualities and how these are required by industry. The comment that states 'more than the requirement of employers' indicates an awareness of the transferability of skills especially when considering statement 16 which mentions the capability of moving within labour markets. These statements will be used to create the label for this factor. The initial indication of shared views within this factor implies that the participants are considering a multistakeholder approach, but interestingly with no mention of Higher Education. Chapter 8 will provide a more in-depth approach to this factor and compare the results from this study to those previously. The awareness of a contextualised approach to Employability is present within the statements allocated significant weighting in table 30, which does resonate with the contextualised approaches discussed within chapter 2 and the literature that has been reviewed within chapter 3. Based on the strengths of the positive statements for this factor, Factor A within this study has been labelled: **Employability is individual awareness of personal skills and competencies that can benefit industry, but with the understanding that these skills are transferable and therefore allow for easier mobility across sectors.**

Table 30 - Factor A – Distinguishing Statements: Study 3

Statement No	Statement	Q-Sort Value	Z Score
33	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required by the changing needs of employers	5	2.02
16	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market	4	1.21
38	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual	4	1.10
51	Complex	3	1.00
2	Skills, understanding and personal attributes	3	0.96
11	Being prepared for employment	2	0.81
49	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job	2	0.63
30	More than the requirements of employers	1	0.39
9	Self-awareness and reflection	0	0.05
23	The responsibility of higher education institutes	-1	-0.16
24	Preparing graduates for success	-1	-0.22
25	Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	-1	-0.23
47	The possession of basic core skills	-2	-0.68
41	Getting a graduate level job	-3	-1.02
14	Gaining initial employment	-3	-1.39
27	The beliefs of a higher education institute	-4	-1.59
40	Securing any job	-4	-1.72
42	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating	-4	-1.77
59	Not my responsibility	-5	-2.15

Phrases relevant to labelling this factor

7.4 FACTOR A

"Employability is individual awareness of personal skills and competencies that can benefit industry, but with the understanding that these skills are transferable and therefore allow for easier mobility across sectors".

This section of this chapter will allow for a closer look at an idealised Q-Sort that has been generated through the analysis to understand what a typical Q-Sort construction would look like from those loaded against this factor. Unlike the previous chapters the commentary provided from the participants will feature later in this chapter when reviewing the findings from the semi-structured interviews. Figure 33 demonstrates an idealised Q-Sort for the participants labelled against Factor A. The way the idealised Q-Sort has been constructed demonstrates the rationale of labelling this factor. Although there has been emphasise placed on the terms of agreement when it comes to labelling this factor, there is still scope to assess statements of disagreement amongst the participants. There appears to be a pattern emerging in relation to statements that mention Higher Education. These statements are placed more towards the left side of the Q-Sort meaning there is a shared view of disagreement. This signals the views of participants in relation to their views on the role in which Higher Education plays within the concept of Employability. Although this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter (Chapter 8) this is also evident within figure 34 which shows the dissection of statement contextualisation for each statement. Although the statements that represent a contextualised approach from Higher Education (green boxes) are spread across the Q-Sort, there is a pattern of clustering centrally and more towards the left, which adds to the previous point made.

Figure 33 - Idealised Q-Sort – Factor A: Study 3

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Being prepared for employment (11)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
Not my responsibility (59)	Securing any job (40)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Complex (51)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
A tick box exercise (50)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Maintaining employment (15)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)
	Not needed (54)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	
		Gaining initial employment (14)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Benefitting the community (6)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)		
			A set of achievements (1)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	Benefitting the economy (7)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)		
				Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)					
					A set of graduate attributes (26)					
					The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)					

Figure 34 - Idealised Q-Sort – Conceptualisation of Employability: Factor A, Study 3

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Being prepared for employment (11)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
Not my responsibility (59)	Securing any job (40)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Complex (51)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
A tick box exercise (50)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Maintaining employment (15)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)
	Not needed (54)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	
		Gaining initial employment (14)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Benefiting the community (6)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)		
			A set of achievements (1)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)		Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)		
				Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Benefitting the economy (7)				
					A set of graduate attributes (26)					
					The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)					

Key:

Industry Focus
Higher Education Focus
Individual Focus

In alignment to the previous 2 studies an idealised Q Sort highlighting how the participants within this factor agree with entire statements of origin can be seen in figure 35. The purpose of including this idealised Q Sort is to enable further discussion within the following chapter in relation to comparing participant perceptions against those found in literature. In this study Q Methodology has been utilised for contextual purposes and to visually represent change or stability when it comes to Employability perspectives over a period of time. Comparing the results between this study and the previous ones will be covered within chapter 8 so for the purposes of this chapter, the role of Q will be used to contextualise some of the information provided by the participants within the semi-structured interviews.

Figure 35 - Idealised Q-Sort Factor A – Q Set Dissection: Study 3

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Being prepared for employment (11)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
Not my responsibility (59)	Securing any job (40)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Complex (51)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
A tick box exercise (50)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Maintaining employment (15)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)
	Not needed (54)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	
		Gaining initial employment (14)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Benefitting the community (6)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)		
			A set of achievements (1)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)			
				Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Benefitting the economy (7)				
					A set of graduate attributes (26)					
					The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)					

NB: Shared colours represent statements that originate from the same literature source.

7.5 INTERVIEW FINDINGS

To display the findings gathered from the interviews conducted, a decision has been made to cluster the participants based upon the factors they loaded against within study 2. As all the participants within this study (except 1) have loaded against only 1 factor and therefore sharing a similar viewpoint, it made sense to share the interview comments based upon their shared starting points in relation to Employability perception, based on the analysis that emerged from study 2. Table 31 shows the factor loadings for each participant from study 2 to further demonstrate the clustering of the statements provided within this section.

Table 31 – Participant Factor Loading Study 2 vs Study 3

Participant	Study 2 Loading	Study 3 Loading
6cd-nw	A	A
27st-nw	A	Not Loaded
7cd-nw	B	A
15c-nw	B	A
31ss-nw	B	A
2sm-nw	C	A
19c-nw	C	A
22c-nw	C	A

As the interviews conducted followed a semi-structured approach (Bernard, 2011) this allowed flexibility within the questions being asked. Some of the participants were very open and very vocal about their experiences, whilst others seemed to answer the questions without much elaboration. Each interview conducted was different based upon the types of responses from the participants and therefore the level of depth being offered by the respondent. Although there is variation in the structure for each script there is a common theme throughout each script. Those themes are:

- Recollections of Employability related modules in year 1

- Any standout points throughout their educational journey that changed their Employability views and general comments on Employability throughout their degree

- Development of Employability outside of university

- Journey since graduating

- Comparing original Q-Sorts (Student vs Graduate)

- Employability engagement comments

The idea behind the themes listed above is to create a picture of not only current accounts of Employability but with the assistance of their original Q-Sorts, reflect and share previous viewpoints and utilise this to tell the story of their academic journey with the concept of Employability being the focus whilst assessing the levels of engagement. In the upcoming section (7.5.1 – 7.5.3), each theme will be presented to ascertain the responses received from the participants with particular focus around comparisons between those who shared similar views within their original Q-Sorts. As this is the findings chapter for study 3, in-depth discussions will be included within Chapter 8 (discussion chapter) to understand and delve into the responses further and to obtain greater understanding from the findings. The 8 transcripts can be found in appendix J.

7.5.1 INTERVIEW FINDINGS (FACTOR A LOADING WITHIN STUDY 2)

For clarity, the participants labelled against Factor A in study 2 believed that Employability is obtaining and maintaining employment by possessing qualities and attributes that employers specify.

- **Recollections of Employability related modules in year 1**

When participants 6cd-nw and 27st-nw were asked about their recollections of Employability related modules or content within their first year of study, both responses seemed quite brief but also with a hint of negativity. Participant 27st-nw stated their recollection was vague and overall the university experience wasn't great but they do recall a module around Employability, but they rarely attended. When comparing this to participant 6cd-nw, the experience was similar but participant 6cd-nw added that they found the Employability modules boring and that if they passed assessments, this is where their attention was focused.

- **Any standout points throughout their educational journey that changed their Employability views and general comments on Employability throughout their degree**
- **Development of Employability outside of university**
- **Comparing original Q-Sorts (Student vs Graduate)**

When asked about if perception changes throughout the 3 year degree programme in relation to Employability both participants stated that a sense of panic came over them as they neared the end of their programme and made them realise they could have done more during their studies. Both these responses deviate slightly away from the question asked of them but this will be explored further within the discussion chapter in relation to Employability definitions. Based on these responses the participants were asked to utilise both Q-Sorts (1st Year Q-Sort and Graduate Q-Sort) to consider whether their views had changed from the original Q-Sort analysis. The participants were informed of the factor they had been labelled against in their original Q-Sort and asked whether this resonated with their feelings in year 1 but also currently. Both participants stated that they felt the labelling of their original Q-Sort was accurate at that time with participant 27st-nw adding that they still feel the same about

Employability. Although in a later statement 27st-nw also added that they are still confused by Employability and for them it was very much job orientated, but when they saw the statements presented to them in research, they began to think there is more to it. Participant 27st-nw admitted that their beliefs on Employability are still centered around the needs of employers and industries and although they have gained more experience their perception of Employability has remained consistent. In contrast, participant 6cd-nw acknowledges that their original Q-Sort does not align with their current beliefs about Employability and that over time through gaining more experience, they understand the power of themselves to create opportunities rather than being reliant on others. When asked about any general comments about Employability throughout their 3-year student journey, participant 6cd-nw seemed more reflective than participant 27st-nw. Participant 6cd-nw reflected on their regrets of not taking some of the opportunities presented to them and commented that this was largely due to not seeing the value at that time. In comparison the response from participant 27st-nw admitted that due to them being a student who rarely engaged they missed out on knowing about the opportunities, let alone taking them. The responses reported so far have been relevant to recollection, so the next question asked of the participants was based on their current situation. Both participants were asked about their current situation in relation to their journey since graduating.

- **Journey since graduating**

Participant 27st-nw stated that they were currently unemployed and finding it difficult to secure work based on funding cuts related to the sector they wanted to pursue. Further commentary was provided stating that their lack of engagement as a student probably hasn't helped their current situation, but that there were also things outside of their control that couldn't be quickly changed. When asked the same question, participant 6cd-nw shared that they currently worked 2 jobs, but neither relate to their degree subject. This participant also recognised that there had been missed opportunities as a student but also felt they were making up for them now via volunteering roles to try and break into a sector they wanted.

- **Employability engagement comments**

 Some interesting comments have been added by participant 6cd-nw about the way in which Employability is delivered and that if the subject of Employability had been related to their chosen subject of sport, perhaps there would be more engagement.

7.5.2 INTERVIEW FINDINGS (FACTOR B LOADING WITHIN STUDY 2)

For clarity, the participants labelled against Factor B in study 2 believed that Employability is not a one size fits all concept and can be individualised based upon the required skills and attributes determined by HEI's.

The individuals included in this section are 7cd-nw, 15c-nw and 31ss-nw as these participants shared similar viewpoints in study 2. It is worth noting that the programme of study in which individual 31ss-nw was enrolled did not include any standalone Employability related modules, and any Employability content was embedded within subject specific modules. This point has been made as this information is useful when understanding some of the differences in the answers provided during the interview.

- **Recollections of Employability related modules in year 1**

When reviewing the first question about their recollections of Employability related modules within their 1st year of study, there was a mixed response from each participant. Participant 7cd-nw mentioned how they enjoyed the modules and perceived it as a break from topics directly related to only their degree programme, whilst the other 2 participants had no real recollection of such modules. Staying with participant 7cd-nw, they did add some further comments,

"Some of the content wasn't the most thrilling and I could see the value in some, but not all, but looking back I think my age and lack of life experience was a big part of this" (7cd-nw).

When asked further about this, participant 7cd-nw admitted to being fully engaged with the modules related around Employability but did go on to say that this did change over time based on the pressures of assessment deadlines and priority of attendance being given to those directly linked to upcoming assessments. In contrast to this, participant 15c-nw states they didn't engage with any Employability related modules as part of their 1st year, but they were keen to find ways of enhancing and developing themselves, but this was always driven by themselves and cut the university out of the picture completely. When comparing this to the response of 31ss-nw, the responses from this participant were expected to be different based on their programme of study excluding standalone Employability modules. Participant 31ss-nw did comment that because Employability was in the background of other modules, it was not really thought about, but they do recall within module handbooks wording such as develop critical self-awareness and reflection and this was evidenced via module assessments. Participant 31ss-nw added that due to some of these skills being assessed within the module assessments they could see how Employability skills were possibly being developed, but not in so much of an obvious way.

- **Any standout points throughout their educational journey that changed their Employability views and general comments on Employability throughout their degree**
- **Comparing original Q-Sorts (Student vs Graduate)**

Within the next question, each participant was asked if at any point during their 3 years of studying their views on Employability changed and if so, how. Participant 7cd-nw was very vocal when answering this question and stated that they felt their awareness as a student was generally very good, but they did mention that the concept of Employability was

confusing at times, and this was based on the different messages portrayed by the numerous members of staff who taught them. Participant 7cd-nw added:

"I had a faith in the university and believed they would steer me in the right direction, I perhaps allowed the uni to take more control over my development than I should of" *(*7cd-nw).

Based on this comment, the participant was asked to review their original Q-Sort to see if it resonated with their beliefs at the time is was completed, the participant responded as follows:

"I can see how my faith in the uni has translated through to these findings, I don't think this is how it should have been, but it was for me" (7cd-nw).

When asked to comment on the original Q-Sort compared to the most current, the participant shared:

"Obviously as I am not in uni anymore I have looked at this slightly differently. I can see that unis have a place in this but I think there are more important people (if that's how to phrase it) who should be ahead of unis, and that includes me. I don't think I gave myself enough credit or power over my own future, but I also don't think this was encouraged by my uni. As someone who believed the uni would steer me in the right direction, if they weren't encouraging me to be part of my own Employability then I would have believed this is correct". (7cd-nw).

When comparing the responses from the other participants included within this section, participant 15c-nw mentioned that as the end of their studies was nearing the end, the idea and worries around employment started to gather momentum. A further question was asked of this participant as to whether these feelings affected their thoughts on Employability. The response received highlighted the way in which the terms Employability and employment seem to be used interchangeably.

"As I said, getting a job was getting closer so thinking about how I would do that and what I would need to do was also in my mind, but for me Employability is still ultimately employment" (15c-nw).

Following on from this comment, the participant compared their original Q-Sort with the most current and admitted that there were surprised by the analysis from the original Q-Sort as they felt the results portrayed them in a better light than what was the reality for them. Participant 15c-nw described themselves as a 'typical student' who wanted to socialise and make the most of being student. Based on this discussion the participant was asked if their views had changed since graduating and the response was as follows:

"Absolutely and I can see how I feed into the process more, it's very much driven by me because ultimately once I leave uni, if I want to keep being employed, well uni isn't there for me anymore, so being independent and taking charge is the thing that will allow me to continue forward in work" (15c-nw).

When comparing this to the response of participant 31ss-nw, they stated that due to the fact there were no specific elements related to Employability throughout their programme, their awareness of Employability never really changed as it seemed to be something that was ticking over in the background. Participant 31ss-nw did also mention about their own curiosity in relation to whether this would have been different if there had been specific modules related to Employability. When asked about reviewing the original Q-Sort completed within year 1, participant 31ss-nw added:

"That probably aligns to what I've said about the university doing things behind the scenes and therefore universities taking a front seat with all things Employability" (31ss-nw).

The participant was then asked whether universities taking a front seat was a good thing, to which the participant responded with:

"When it's put like that, probably not. I suppose it's my future so I should feature somewhere" (31ss-nw).

Participant 31ss-nw then utilised the most recent Q-Sort and explained that due to new experiences and being in employment, they would agree that the analysis conducted within this study represent them more at this current time.

Before moving on all participants were asked about any general reflective comments they wish to make about Employability in general throughout their university journey. Participant 15c-nw very blatantly stated that their level of engagement was non-existent and that any opportunities they had, derived from themselves. From this comment, participant 15c-nw was asked if they therefore had any recommendations to change this to enhance engagement levels, the response was as follows:

"Working subtleties into modules that students enjoy more as I also think this would make it easier on staff as some of the sessions you could see were difficult for staff. Almost like pulling teeth at times". (15c-nw)

In contrast to this statement, participant 31ss-nw stated that due to Employability being embedded within other modules it is difficult to ascertain their engagement levels. To further elaborate participant 31ss-nw added that providing more options in relation to either embedded Employability or modules with only an Employability focus could raise awareness of engagement with the concept. The same question was asked of participant 7cd-nw who admitted that their engagement levels with anything Employability/personal development based was good to an extent as they admitted they could have done more. When asked about any recommendations for universities going forward, the following response was shared:

"Being in control of my own future is something I wish I had been encouraged to do. Being part of my own personal development, I think could have highlighted how I am growing and hopefully this would be much easier to then translate into job applications etc". (7cd-nw)

- **Development of Employability outside of university**

On question 4, participants were asked about the development of Employability outside of university. Participants 31ss-nw and 7cd-nw shared that, opportunities had been presented to them via the university to gain experience externally, with participant 7cd-nw stating that they wish they had taken advantage of more than only 1 opportunity as several opportunities had been presented. Participant 15c-nw added that any outside opportunity that was taken was done so based on the ones they sought for themselves and not an opportunity stemming from the university. Participant 15c-nw added further comments and stated that they would often miss classes for these opportunities outside of university.

As the picture became clearer of the educational journeys for each participant, the focus of questioning then shifted towards their current situation.

- **Journey since graduating**

When asked about their journey since graduating, all participants stated they are currently in employment. Participant 31ss-nw works as a Sports Scientist within Rugby and when asked if there is anything the university could have done differently that would benefit them in their role, the response was as follows:

"Not really as the experience I got within elite sport as a student did come from the uni, so without that, I probably wouldn't be in the role I am today". (31ss-nw).

Answering the same question participant 7cd-nw shared that they are currently working as a health trainer within a local authority but did also admit this is not the role they set out to be doing. As the participant stated this is not the job they envisaged, I revisited a point this participant made earlier in the interview about taking ownership for Employability, the following response was given:

"I think being able to see my own development and also being able to add input into what I feel I need to develop is important. I suppose maybe as an 18 year old you may

not know what that is, but it would be nice to be asked and considered so that I also have some input". (7cd-nw).

When the same question was asked of participant 15c-nw they shared that they still work for one of the coaching companies they did whilst at university but in a more senior role due to the number of years' experience. I then asked if they believed university played any part in the securing and success in this role, the participant responded as follows:

"That's a tough question. I think having my degree has helped me secure a full-time contract, I think my experience allowed me to get the foot in the door and I can see the value in the content within the coaching modules that do still help me today" (15c-nw).

- **Employability engagement comments**

To complete the interview, all participants were asked the following cluster of questions:

Q6: Would you say you were engaged/disengaged with the concept of Employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of Employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with Employability?

Below are the responses from the 3 participants featured in this section of the chapter.

"Disengaged completely I would say. The delivery was an issue for me, I didn't find it interesting so I would either turn up and be passive or I wouldn't turn up at all. I think I have done what I needed to do for myself and therefore removed the role of anyone advising me on the things I should be doing" (15c-nw).

"I would say I was 50/50, could see the value sometimes but not always, engaged sometimes but not all the time. I thought the delivery was inconsistent and this also depended on who was teaching us as this altered the messages coming across. I think I've said all I can. (7cd-nw).

"Unknowingly I would say I was engaged but as I was somewhat unaware it is difficult to comment on the delivery as it was all blended together. I think the points I have made earlier are only the same ones I would repeat now" (31ss-nw).

7.5.3 INTERVIEW FINDINGS (FACTOR C LOADING WITHIN STUDY 2)

For clarity, the participants labelled against Factor C in study 2 believed that Employability is focussed on personal awareness of individual capability, attitude, and the realisation of potential with the understanding that based upon this, Employability can hold different meanings for everyone.

The individuals included in this section are 2sm-nw, 19c-nw and 22c-nw as these participants shared similar viewpoints in study 2. It is worth noting that the programme of study in which individual 2sm-nw was enrolled did not include any standalone Employability related modules, and any Employability content was embedded within subject specific modules. This point has been made as this information is useful when understanding some of the differences in the answers provided during the interview.

- **Recollections of Employability related modules in year 1**

As mentioned within the previous sections, the first question asked of these participants focussed on their recollections of Employability-based modules in year 1. Participant 2sm-nw stated their course did not have modules specifically related to Employability and that it appeared to be something that was taught within other modules. When asked if this impacted on their engagement with Employability they responded with a simple 'no', they elaborated on this by complimenting their awareness of their own responsibilities. When the same question was asked to participant 22c-nw, they expressed how much they enjoyed the Employability related modules as it allowed some of the teaching focus to be on them as students to prepare them for leaving university. This was further explained as follows:

"I get that people value things in different ways but surely we come to uni to make to make the chances better of getting the career we actually want and for me this module was dedicated to that type of thing. Perhaps it was my attitude but because I recognised that developing my skills would position me better I took all the chances to practice those skills and try to make them better" (22c-nw).

Based on this comment and the fact this participant seemed very engaged with the concept of Employability, a further question was asked related to the delivery of the Employability related module. The participant responded with the following:

"I didn't find it a problem, but I could also see that some of the tutors struggled because of the lack of engagement from some students, but then saying that, some tutors managed to stretch the relevance of some of the content and made it more relatable to sport which I think was good and actually brought some of those who seemed disinterested back" (22c-nw).

The same question around recollection was asked of participant 19c-nw but their account was very different as they stated that their experiences of anything Employability related in year 1 was non-existent, but they did recall completing the Q-Sort template as part of this research. Participant 19c-nw also admitted that during the data collection phase for this thesis (study 2) some of the statements had little to no meaning to them and some were placed on the Q-Sort randomly due to lack of understanding. Following this statement the participant was asked about whether they would say they were engaged with the concept of Employability during year 1, the response was as follows:

"Yes and no, I would say that I struggled to find the classes enjoyable which often meant I didn't care if I missed sessions, but then I did feel that sometimes I was missing out when I was seeing my classmates doing well and better than me in their assessments which didn't make me feel great. I just found the content boring and it seemed out of place with the course I was on as it was very rarely related to coaching or anything coaching like" (19c-nw).

Staying with participant 19c-nw, the question was asked about whether they felt their views on Employability changed throughout their university programme.

- **Any standout points throughout their educational journey that changed their Employability views and general comments on Employability throughout their degree**

- **Comparing original Q-Sorts (Student vs Graduate)**

Participant 19c-nw responded that their views did change but very slowly, but there was a specific point during their degree programme that stood out. During their 2nd year of study, a former student returned to talk about their experiences and life after university and he mentioned the use of Johari window and how it changed how he could be viewed by others and the impact on his future. Hearing stories from past students was a turning point for participant 19c-nw as it allowed a perspective that was more relatable. The participant was asked if they did anything in particular because of this turning point and the participant acknowledged that the use of Johari window was implemented and heightened their awareness of how they are perceived by others. Based on these comments, participant 19c-nw was asked whether they agreed with the labelling of factor C (study 2) as this was a portrayal of their beliefs in year 1 of their undergraduate programme, they responded with the following:

"I would agree with that statement now but I am a little surprised that this was how I was portrayed in my first year of uni as I feel like I messed around and didn't take things as seriously as a I should of" (19c-nw).

Participant 22c-nw was asked the same question of whether their views on Employability changed throughout their programme to which they responded that they didn't feel they changed and their views stayed fairly consistent whilst at university. Participant 22c-nw also mentioned that they looked for their own ways to develop themselves which led to a question of why this was and whether the university facilitated this in anyway. Participant 22c-nw provided the following response:

"I felt like the uni could only do so much for me and something that I was noticing was that all the skills that needed developing within me and maybe other students seemed very instructional, for example we would be told, you need to develop presentation skills because we know this is what you will need. This is a fair point but I already felt like I was quite good at presenting, so if I had been asked my opinion on my own development, I would have said that I would prefer to be developing other skills that I am not so good at" (22c-nw).

Participant 22c-nw was asked to consider whether they agreed with the label in which they had been assigned based on their original Q-Sort in year 1 of their studies. Participant 22c-nw said they agreed with the labelling as it was an appropriate fit for not only their retrospective views but also in the present. When asked to elaborate on this, the following response was provided:

"I am a crucial part of my own responsibility but unfortunately I don't feel like that was considered. As a student I felt like I needed to take instruction and do what I was told"

(22c-nw)

Based on this comment I asked the participant whether their input on their own Employability was asked, the response given was a resounding, no, never. The same question was asked to participant 2sm-nw to assess whether their views on Employability had changed over 3 years and they responded with the following:

"I do feel like some of my views have changed over time, but I am not sure if this is due to the university. I am someone who tries to get as much experience as possible, sometimes I have 3-4 different opportunities at any one time and I think my perception has altered through my experiences away from university. I feel like my understanding of what employers want, has developed by working across a few sectors, I'm not sure I ever got that complete message from uni" (2sm-nw).

When participant 2sm-nw was presented with their Q-Sorts to compare against, they commented that they could see similarities especially around the statements related to personal development and individual capability. A further comment was made that their experiences allowed them to see the role of industries more and the placing of the statement referring to moving within labour markets was influenced by that. After the participant was informed of how their Q-Sorts had been labelled they stated that they agreed with the label assigned to each Q-Sort they had completed.

- **Development of Employability outside of university**

All participants were then asked to comment more generally on Employability throughout their university journey. This was somewhat of an open question to allow for freedom in the commentary they wished to provide. Participant 2sm-nw commented on how they now see the impact of being proactive with the concept of Employability has assisted them as a graduate. Following on from this comment this participant also added the following:

"I feel the role of my uni was quite limited and although there are different departments and career services, my Employability, in my view enhanced when I took control. I kind of feel that uni's have specific information about Employability and just deliver it to students, but I was never involved in any process at uni that allowed me to be part of my own Employability whilst being a student. This only happened during my experiences away from university" (2sm-nw)

To finalise this commentary, participant 2sm-nw concluded with:

"It would have been nice to have been asked about Employability, and although you asked us in our first year and it was for your research, I was never asked again during my student journey" (2sm-nw).

Drawing on the comments made from participant 2sm-nw in regard to developing Employability outside of university, there is a similar pattern emerging from participants 22c-nw and 19c-nw. Participant 22c-nw admitted to taking as many opportunities outside of university as they could, and the value of these experiences are still obvious within their life as a graduate. In a somewhat of statements, participant 19c-nw stated that eventually they

began to take opportunities, but they also admitted to wasting a lot of time quite early in their student life. Much like participant 22c-nw, participant 19c-nw also recognises the importance of the skills acquired outside of university during those experiences and the impact on their working life since graduating. All 3 participants have admitted to gaining something positive from outside experiences whilst at university which led to a question being asked around suggestions for anything the university could do better. There are 2 distinct answers emerging from this question, the first is that from participant 19c-nw"

"I can only speak for myself but there is a reason why I, and probably others find topics like this quite difficult to engage with, so my comments would be around assessing how this could be improved to enhance the levels of engagement" (19c-nw).

The 2nd distinct answer was somewhat a shared opinion between participants 2sm-nw and 22c-nw, who provided the following commentary:

"Actually involving us" (22c-nw).

"Involve the students more, at the end of the day this is their Employability, their life, let them have some ownership". (2sm-nw).

- **Journey since graduating**

To move the interviews along, the focus of the participants was now on life beyond being a student, with the conversation moving towards their graduate life. Each participant was asked to share their journey since graduating, this included career, education or training. When answering this question each participant had a very different journey to share. Participant 2sm-nw admitted to working in many roles but also added that they have returned

to studying. Participant 19c-nw stated they are in employment but not in a role they want and not in a role directly related to their programme of study. Participant 22c-nw mentioned that they have secured a role in the profession they wanted but to secure this role, multiple roles were had previously. From the 3 participants featured in this section, participant 2sm-nw was much more open to elaboration on this question. When asked why they decided to return to studying the reply was as follows:

"From my experiences I can see how markets change and I have recognised that there are some things I need to improve and become qualified in different areas. I feel from an Employability perspective I have good awareness, and this is obvious through my reasoning of returning to study, but I need a qualification in a different area as I have identified where I want to go in my career". (2sm-nw).

The contrasts that have emerged across the participants continue until the end of the interview and this is evidenced in the final question which was focussed on their own views of their engagement levels as undergraduate students.

- **Employability engagement comments**

Participant 2sm-nw admitted that their attendance was not great and therefore their level of engagement from a university perspective would probably be seen as disengaging, but this participant then added a comment related to their engagement outside of university:

"I was doing more for my personal development in my own time and I saw this as productive. My Employability has been enhanced but I do feel this is largely due to my own drive and determination with a small steer from the uni" (2sm-nw).

In contrast participant 22c-nw stated that their engagement levels could not have been better and for them, the delivery was ok and they feel the reward of attending and engaging in the content delivered by the university has allowed them to reap the rewards. Whilst participant 19c-nw stated their engagement was shocking and this was largely to the dislike of the content in terms of delivery style.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The emergence of 1 factor from the Q Analysis within this study shows that there is a level of agreement between the participants within this study. What is an interesting find and one that will be explored in much more detail in the final chapter is that prior to this study (study 2) these participants were represented across different factors at the beginning of their student journey. The addition of the interviews shows some real value in the context to which these perceptions have altered over time and what has impacted on these perceptions changing. There is a difficulty when trying to align these findings with those across literature when this particular demographic are underrepresented in the research domain, but comparing perceptions over time and utilising theories is a way in which some understanding can be given to these findings. The following chapter will utilise the findings, compare them over the different time periods and utilise the information captured within study 1 to ascertain the influence of those within study 1. The purpose of this thesis is to understand the perceptions of Employability from a view of students and understanding how these perceptions can impact on engagement. Considering some of these participants have had similar academic experiences, there are still differences that have obtained via the interview data, again this will be explored within the final chapter. Although Chapter 8 will discuss the comparisons across all studies within this thesis, there is already an emergence of change and context to justify this change, particularly within this study. In relation to the objective for this study:

- **Investigate the key influences on undergraduate student engagement with Employability throughout their student journey**

This objective has been achieved and has highlighted that there is a shared viewpoint in relation to the perception of Employability which previously was not evident. Understanding the influences that impact upon these perceptions have been highlighted throughout the interviews conducted with the participants in this study.

7.7 THE STUDENT VOICE: MY VIEWS AS A RESEARCH STUDENT: STUDY 3

Only 1 emergent factor from the Q Analysis in this study is not a result I expected. Although the cohort is smaller and therefore perhaps the expectation of less factors was prominent, I still thought more than 1 factor would emerge. For me as a research student, it was also nice to see the way in which the world had changed for some of these participants and asking them to reflect was insightful for me to understand their journeys and how the different bumps along the way created their current situation. Something that was evident when conducting the interviews was the impression of regret that they were creating and this is evident in some of the commentary, but part of me also thinks some of their evolution from student to graduate and acknowledging those regrets is part of growing up and having experiences, so I can't imagine with a different set of participants the impression of regret would not be present. Another point that I thought was interesting was their comments around ownership and surprisingly the lack of ownership they felt as a student. Although some suggested the university was steering them, it's an interesting observation that these participants now realise they should have been the captain of their own ship with the university perhaps acting as crew members.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

8.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a holistic discussion of the findings contained within this thesis. Detailed discussion for each study will be included in addition to how the findings from these studies interlink. Discussions to compare the studies will be included also. As mentioned in the preceding chapters of this thesis, the research objectives have been met through the previous chapters, this chapter addresses how the findings from those objectives align to address the aim of this thesis which is to develop an understanding of what Employability means to undergraduate sport students and assess how this may impact their engagement with Employability. To utilise the findings obtained within this study, section 8.6 will outline the output from this research to contribute even more to the existing knowledge around the concept of Employability. Limitations to this research will also be considered before finalising this chapter with some overall conclusions.

8.1 DISCUSSION: STUDY 1

When assessing the findings from study 1 alongside objective 3 it could be interpreted that although there is not a complete shared understanding of Employability amongst Higher Education staff, there are several clusters of shared views. These clusters are evident within this study via the 3 emergent factors. The 3 emergent factors within this study align, almost identically to correlate with who the QAA (2014) classify as key stakeholders within the concept of Employability. The findings from this study are particularly pertinent to the purpose of this research due to the theoretical considerations such as that of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). The relevance of Social Cognitive Theory in this study relates to the concept of behaviours and motives being driven by experiences and influence (Bandura, 1986). As the participants within this study are in direct contact with the students, this brings theories such as SCT into the frame based on their interactions and potential influence on those students. The relevance of this theory will feature throughout this section when there is evidence of this theory in action. Within the upcoming sections 8.1.1 – 8.1.3 each factor will be discussed to understand each shared view, the participants loaded against them and how this also relates back to previous literature.

8.1.1 DISCUSSION: STUDY 1: FACTOR A

The label given to those participants within Factor A of study 1 is:

"Employability is driven by the individual".

Although the idealised Q-Sort (figure 14, chapter 5) does not reflect each individual Q-Sort per participant, the idea behind this approach is to create an idealised view of how those loaded against this factor perceive Employability. There is clear evidence from the placement of the statements that justify the labelling of this factor and therefore portraying a shared view focussed on individual accountability when it comes to the concept of Employability. The participant commentary provided within this study adds further rationale for how this factor has been labelled and this is evident through some of the statements provided which are as follows:

"Employability is about individual acquisition" (staffc).

"There has to be a form of accountability from the student themselves" (staffb).

"Employability is assessing key skills and attributes on an individual level" (staff1).

While those participants labelled against this factor share similar views in relation to the concept of Employability, there is difficulty when trying to understand why their views are different to the other participants within this study. Although individual answers to this can be found in the participant statements, consideration has been given also to the participant demographics which can be seen in table 32. From the demographics of the participants loaded against this factor there doesn't appear to be an obvious theme emerging, in fact there is an even distribution across the variables within table 32. There is equal representation from each institution and there is equal distribution in terms of gender. In addition to this there is also representation covering numerous levels of experience within the field of teaching. The only demographic variable of discussion amongst these participants is the dominance of participants loaded onto this factor that fall between the ages of 40-49. This

could be irrelevant, but it also could be indicative of how Employability was taught to them during their time within education.

Table 32 – Study 1: Factor A: Participant Demographics

Participant Identifier	HEI (NW=North West, Mid = Midlands)	Job Role	Gender	Age Bracket A=21-29, B=30-39, C=40-49, D=50-59, E=60+	No of years teaching experience A=1-3 years, B=4-10 years, C=11-19 years, D=20+ Years
staff1	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	A	A
staff4	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	C	B
staff10	NW	Course Leader	M	C	D
staffb	Mid	Course Leader	F	C	C
staffc	Mid	Course Leader	F	C	C
staffd	Mid	Course Leader	F	B	B

Due to the participants within this study not being the focal point of this thesis, these are questions that were not asked as the understanding of why they perceive Employability in the way they do, starts to move the purpose of these participants within this thesis out of line. For the purpose of this thesis, the participants within study 1 represent the voices of staff who have been included to lend value to the voices of students. As there are no obvious patterns in relation to demographical information for those loaded against this factor, assessing how the views of these participants align with those in literature is a necessary part of discussion. As evidenced within Chapter 5 there are numerous statements in literature that share the views of those who have been loaded against this factor. The labelling of this factor leans towards the notion of Employability being a psychological process and which derives from the willingness and desire of individuals themselves. This correlates well to literature from Stephenson (1998) who utilises phrases such as a process and one that requires psychological processing to build upon personal skillsets. This is a resonant message within literature as others have shared similar views in which Employability has often been described as the need for a proactive approach, establishing an individual identity and the capability and willingness of individuals (Dacre-Pool and Sewell, 2007; deGrip, Van loo and Sanders, 2004; Trought, 2012). Although there are correlations between the views of the

participants loaded against Factor A and literature there are also some disparities in relation to agreement/disagreement with literature statements in their entirety. When assessing the array of dissemination of statements for the idealised Q-Sort for Factor A, the origin of complete statements in some instances have been spread across the Q-Sort, which implies there is agreement with parts of whole statements in literature, but not all. Utilising figure 14 (chapter 5) and the use of colour coding it is clear to see the spread of statements across the Q-Sort. Each colour represents a single piece of literature to which these statements originated from, for example, there are 10 dark green statements within figure 36, these 10 statements have originated from 1 large statement by Yorke (2006). The purpose of dissecting statements of origin was to provide participants the opportunity to allow freedom of choice and the ability to agree/disagree or partly agree with literature without the restriction of having to agree with an entire statement. Yorke is a prominent figure within Employability literature so to see the widespread approach of his views across the idealised Q-Sort for this factor shows that when presented with an opportunity to choose what and what not to agree with, there are discrepancies between the perceptions of those reading the literature and those writing it. A similar pattern has emerged from those statements highlighted in light yellow which originate from a position paper by Harvey (2001). The representation of original statement spreading within this Q-Sort adds to the idea that Employability does hold different meanings for everyone which is highlighted within the work of Yorke (2006). The ability to dissect these statements has allowed the participants to pick and choose aspects of statements that align to their perceptions, and in this instance, that is about the individual within the process of Employability. The levels of agreement and disagreement from original statements that is evidenced in figure 14, highlights the importance of using literature and being able to pick aspects that align with personal beliefs, without the need to agree with entire statements that may go against those beliefs and perceptions.

8.1.2 DISCUSSION: STUDY 1: FACTOR B

The label given to those participants within Factor B of study 1 is:

"Employability is driven by Higher Education with an appreciation for the complexities involved".

As mentioned in the previous section although the idealised Q-Sort does not reflect each individual Q-Sort per participant (figure 16, chapter 5), the idea behind this approach is to create an idealised view of how those loaded against this factor perceive Employability. There is clear evidence from the placement of the statements that justify the labelling of this factor and therefore portraying a shared view focussed on the role of higher education when it comes to the concept of Employability. The participant comments provided within this study add further rationale for how this factor has been labelled and this is evident through some of the statements provided which are as follows:

"It is our responsibility to make the students employable. It is up to us to know what skills the students will need" (staff11).

"The role of Higher Education is pivotal, but I do think there are flaws in the way this is executed" (staff3).

"Employability is becoming more important for Higher Education institutes; it drives some of the metrics in which we are measured" (staff7).

"I don't think gaining a job within a specified time after graduating has anything to do with Employability. Employability should be constant, not a one-time thing" (staff8).

As with the previous section (8.1.1) understanding the reasoning behind the perceptions of each individual participant can be tricky and if the purpose of this thesis was to understand

the background and reasoning of staff perceptions of Employability, then this would be easier to explore, but the participants within study 1 are included to add context to the focus of this thesis, the students. However, understanding staff perception is still a crucial part of this thesis and trying to ascertain patterns amongst these participants to provide rationale and reasoning is still a requirement. Table 33 demonstrates the demographical information of those participants within study 1 who loaded against Factor B.

Table 33 – Study 1: Factor B: Participant Demographics

Participant Identifier	HEI (NW=North West, Mid = Midlands)	Job Role	Gender	Age Bracket A=21-29, B=30-39, C=40-49, D=50-59, E=60+	No of years teaching experience A=1-3 years, B=4-10 years, C=11-19 years, D=20+ Years
staff2	NW	Course Leader	M	D	A
staff3	NW	Student Experience Lead	F	D	C
staff7	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	A	A
staff8	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	C	B
staff9	NW	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	C	C
staff11	NW	Course Leader	M	C	D
staffa	Mid	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	C	C
staffe	Mid	Lecturer on Employability related modules	M	A	A

Using the information within table 33 there are no apparent patterns relating to the demographics of those loaded against this factor. The only variable within this table that stands out is that this factor appears to be male dominated. There is no apparent reason why this would add to the justification of being loaded onto this factor based on how gender plays a part in individual perceptions, therefore it has been concluded that the male presence within this factor is purely mathematical based on the entire study being represented by almost 69% male. As there are no clear areas of discussion from a demographical perspective

of those loaded onto this factor, focus will therefore shift to how the views of those participants within this factor align to those in literature.

The labelling of this factor not only allows for the exploration of literature relating to Employability and higher education, but it also allows for consideration towards external influence and metrics that can also impact on the concept. The views of the participants loaded within this factor are shared throughout literature and this is evident within the work of Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert (2020); Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne (2017); Tomlinson (2012); Trought (2012); Willetts (2010); Alexandre, Portela and Sa (2009); Yorke (2006); Knight and Yorke (2003); Harvey, Locke and Morey (2002); Pierce (2002) and Harvey (2001) who all speak of the way in which graduates are created and the role that is played by Universities when shaping these graduates. However, there are complexities to consider alongside Higher Education and their thoughts on Employability. These complexities have been highlighted by the work of Tymons (2013) who picked up on the findings from Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen (1998) in his work, and made points relating to the role in which university politics skew the concept of Employability and rather than it being classified as a developmental aspect of education and beyond, it is in fact often seen as a metric driven initiative. This research correlates with a quote provided by participant staff7 who mentioned that Employability drives some of the metrics in which institutions are measured. There is a clear and resonant view of how Employability and the metrics that can derive from the concept are received within literature but also within this study, the idea of Employability driving metrics seems something that most are aware of. The idea of Employability driving metrics is often portrayed as a negative within literature (AGCAS, 2011; Alexandre, Portela and Sa, 2009) but there is little within literature stating how metrics can drive Employability, apart from literature around feedback of student satisfaction or student engagement (Bryson; 2014 and Smith; 2012). When assessing how the participants within this factor have wholly agreed or disagreed with literature statements of origin, there are some obvious patterns emerging, as there was in Factor A. Utilising figure 16 (chapter 5) there is an interesting find when assessing the statement from Willetts (2010) which is represented by statements 23,55 and 56 (electric blue colour code). The statements that originate from the views of Willett (2010) are again spread across the Q-sort, but 1 statement has been deemed highly significant within this Q-Sort; statement 56.

The literature from Willetts (2010) in its entirety, states that Employability is important for Higher Education, is the responsibility of the institution and is therefore considered more important for the institution than the student. The purpose of dissecting statements of origin is for this very purpose, and to allow the participants to be selective when it comes to deciding what they choose to and not to agree with. The example by Willetts (2010) identifies that although there is some logic in the statement as a whole, it should not be assumed that agreement with a single piece of literature signals complete agreement with the thoughts of that author. In contrast to this, the statements coded in dark yellow represent the work of DHFETE (2002) (statements 16,37-39) and are tightly clustered around columns 1 and 2 of the idealised Q-Sort and therefore representing a strong level of agreement with the entirety of the literature statement of origin. When assessing the idealised Q-Sort and the labelling of this factor there is a strong contingent of authors who perceive the concept of Employability from the conceptualisation of Higher Education, and this seems a resonant opinion of those loaded against this factor.

8.1.3 DISCUSSION: STUDY 1: FACTOR C

The label given to those participants within Factor C of study 1 is:

"Employability is industry driven and the contributions that can be made to society and communities".

As mentioned in the previous section although the idealised Q-Sort does not reflect each individual Q-Sort per participant (figure 18, chapter 5), the idea behind this approach is to create an idealised view of how those loaded against this factor perceive Employability. There is clear evidence from the placement of the statements that justify the labelling of this factor and therefore portraying a shared view focussed on the role of industry when it comes to the concept of Employability. The participant comments provided within this study add further rationale for how this factor has been labelled and this is evident through some of the statements provided which are as follows:

"The purpose of Employability is to gain employment, so regardless of the sector or even job role, if someone secures a job, surely this means they demonstrate good Employability skills" (staff5).

"If a graduate secures a role in the relevant sector, then I would classify this as a success from an Employability perspective" (staff5).

"Students will often ask; how can I secure an opportunity'. To me this means this student is prepared to be moulded to fit in with that organisation. This approach has led to successes and therefore for me this is successful Employability" (staff6).

As with the preceding sections of this chapter, understanding if there is a demographical pattern between those loaded against this factor is something that must be considered. Unlike the previous factors within this study, the number loaded against this factor is

relatively small in comparison and therefore when utilising demographical information, the sample size is something to note. Table 34 highlights the demographics of those loaded against Factor C in study 1.

Table 34 – Study 1: Factor C: Participant Demographics

Participant Identifier	HEI (NW=North West, Mid = Midlands)	Job Role	Gender	Age Bracket A=21-29, B=30-39, C=40-49, D=50-59, E=60+	No of years teaching experience A=1-3 years, B=4-10 years, C=11-19 years, D=20+ Years
Staff5	NW	Course Leader	M	C	D
Staff6	NW	Placement Lead	F	C	C

As mentioned, although sample size must be considered within this factor, there are some obvious observations to be made when assessing the demographics of the 2 participants loaded against factor C. The first observation is that the 2 participants loaded within this factor are from the same institute meaning there is no representation at all for the university located in the Midlands. If this factor contained more participants, then it could be argued that if only one institution was being represented, further exploration would be needed but due to the sample size being small and the overall sample size across study 1 being represented by 69% of staff from the North West University, the probability of the 2 participants being from the North West was highly likely. The theory of mathematical probability being a likely explanation for the demographics within this factor also applies to gender, age and experience. However, when it comes to job role, it is interesting that of all the participants within this study, the 2 that are loaded against factor C are in 'lead' roles (course leader and placement lead). This is particularly pertinent due to their approaches of looking more holistically at the process of Employability and therefore capturing the need and roles of industry within their perceptions. An interesting observation is around the participant who is a placement lead. This type of role involves constant interaction with external clients to the university and therefore learning what skills and qualities need to be adopted by students to succeed in securing placements. Therefore, there is no surprise in this participant being loaded onto a factor that has been classified as perceiving Employability from an industry perspective when considering their role. The views of the participants

loaded onto Factor C could be considered similar to the views of Robins and Gower (2003) who state that not all learning takes place in a classroom which implies that external learning environments can be a critical part of Employability development in preparation for the working world beyond university life. Utilising figure 18 (chapter 5) the statements colour coded in orange represent a statement of origin from Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003) and although the 4 statements are spread across the Q-Sort there is a small cluster under columns 3 and 4 that relate to similar points. If using this statement as an example there are 2 statements that relate to employment, 1 statement that relates to an individual and 1 statement that refers to the labour market. The statements related to the individual and labour market have been placed at the disagreement end of the Q-Sort, showing that parts of this statements are agreed with but not all. Although there is not an individual focus on this factor, there are some statements that relate to individual importance positioning on the far-right side of the Q-Sort. These statements feed into the aspect of the labelling for this factor in relation to contributing towards society, as this is an individual expectation. As a prominent name in literature the work by Yorke (2006) is one of focus across this factor as well as the ones preceding this. As with the factors before this, the statements highlighted in dark green represent the work by Yorke (2006) who is a dominant author within the field of Employability. The difference however, within this factor is that aside from one statement (statement 6) the remaining statements are clustered closely, placed between 2 and -2. So although there are still areas of disagreement, this factor is the one which shows the strongest level of agreement between the participants. This, however, does not mean the participants agree with the views of Yorke, but it does show the participants think similarly about the views of Yorke.

8.1.4 SUMMARY: STUDY 1

The factors that have emerged from this study show that amongst Higher Education staff there are different perceptions of Employability, but these perceptions still align to core conceptualisations of Employability as outlined within the literature review (chapter 3) and the QAA model (2014). When assessing all the factors together within this study, an observation to note is that there is no presence of representation for the Midlands university within Factor C and those within Factor C do not directly teach on Employability related modules. As mentioned in section 8.1.3, sample size must be considered when assessing Factor C as this factor only represents the views of 2 participants.

Although the discovery of 3 themes emerging from this study is an interesting find there are concerns based on these differences being shared with students. Alvarez et al (2019) states that sharing different views can add variety and additional perspectives but as Tisdell and Taylor (2010) state, having varied opinions from multiple people when teaching can also cause confusion for learners. Although there could be an argument made for each case based on variety vs learner confusion, the expectation of 16 participants sharing the same perception of Employability is also unrealistic and brings in the true validity of Q Methodology which is based on subjective views. When assessing these views alongside theoretical concepts such as Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), this could explain why these perceptions are aligned in the way they are. Each perspective will be shaped by personal experiences and whether this is of interest when understanding how these personal perceptions impact on students. The findings from this study will hold even more importance when evaluating the findings from study 3 in relation to if any of these perceptions from staff impacted on those perceptions reported in study 3 and whether this also impacted on engagement levels throughout the student journey.

8.2 DISCUSSION: STUDY 2

When assessing the findings from study 2 alongside objective 2 there are clear differences in the way Employability is perceived and the way in which Employability is understood. The differences in perception have been acquired via the analysis of each participant Q-Sort and the knowledge of Employability has been obtained via the post Q-Sort interviews. As with study 1, there are 3 apparent factors that have emerged via the factor analysis conducted. Unlike study 1, the 3 emergent factors do not align with the QAA model (2014) completely but there are hints of how each factor could be classified as following similar conceptualisations as that within the QAA model (2014). The timing of this study was purposely selected to capture the perceptions of students early into their university experience to exclude the chances of influence. This therefore justifies, as with study 1, the importance of considering some theoretical underpinning in relation to justifying why these participants perceive Employability in the way they do. Social Cognitive Theory has once again been chosen as a theory that can underpin the findings within this study due to its foundations being rooted in experience and behaviour. The relevance of this theory will feature throughout this section when there is evidence of this theory in action. Within the upcoming sections 8.2.1 – 8.2.3 each factor will be discussed to understand each shared view, the participants loaded against them and how this also relates back to previous literature.

8.2.1 DISCUSSION: STUDY 2: FACTOR A

The label given to those participants within Factor A of study 2 is:

"Employability is obtaining and maintaining employment by possessing qualities and attributes that employers specify".

The idea of an idealised Q-Sort is to form a representation of how similar views are shared across a cluster of participants around the perception of Employability (figure 24, chapter 6). There is evidence from the placement of the statements that justify the labelling of this factor and therefore portraying a shared view focussed on the role of industry and employers when

254

it comes to the concept of Employability. The participant responses provided within this study add further rationale for how this factor has been labelled and this is evident through some of the statements provided which are as follows:

"There are always jobs there, even if you don't like doing it. You just have to get on with it. If I need a job, then I need to have what the employer is looking for" (8cd-nw).

"Getting a job is important and for me Employability is about that, no matter what it is" (13c-nw).

"If you understand the sector that you want to enter, then you can make sure you have the skills to secure employment" (28st-nw).

"Employment or Employability (whatever it's called) is the ultimate aim for me, so to achieve this isn't about anything more than the requirements of employers and how I match that. Employment is Employability" (9cd-nw).

To follow a similar pattern to the previous sections within this chapter understanding the demographics of the participants loaded against this factor is a crucial starting point to understand where some perceptions may originate from. 28% of the participants in this study (11 participants) have been loaded onto factor A, therefore showing a healthy weight of representation within this factor. Table 35 demonstrates the demographics of those loaded against Factor A in study 2. Utilising the information within table 35 there is a resounding pattern that demonstrates all the participants loaded against this factor are students at the University in the northwest with no representation present for the university located in the Midlands. This therefore highlights that for those participants enrolled at the university in the Northwest they share similar perceptions of Employability to those of Flanders (1995) and DHFETE (2002) who state that Employability is the ability to secure and function in any job with the capability to move into and within labour markets. Although this research is very blunt and portrays an adamant attitude towards the concept of Employability, there are hints

of the same attitude within the commentary of those loaded onto this factor. Although it could be argued that there is a hint of individuality with the mention of qualities and attributes, this is somewhat of a stretch as the label is steering those qualities and attributes in the direction of employer needs rather than at the choice of individuals.

Table 35 – Study 2: Factor A: Participant Demographics

Participant Identifier	HEI (NW=North West, Mid = Midlands)	Course Title	Gender
6cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
8cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
9cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
13c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
17c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
23c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	F
27st-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Studies	M
28st-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Studies	F
29ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	M
32ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	F
33ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	M

* Standalone Employability Modules

When looking further into the demographics of the participants loaded onto this factor there is also a clear imbalance in relation to those who studied programmes with standalone Employability modules compared to those who didn't. Another pattern to note is that within this study, only 2 participants represented BA (Hons) Sports Studies and both of those participants have been loaded onto this factor. To try and understand why this may have occurred it is worth assessing the influence of staff and the information that is delivered to those on that course. Understanding influence is again another example of how the use of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) comes into play as those who are teaching and interacting with these participants could be partly responsible for their perceptions of Employability. This is also evidenced in a study by De Hei (2016) where it has been reported that university teaching staff can influence not only engagement, but the beliefs and perspectives of the students they teach (Evans and Kozhevnikova, 2011; Fransen, Kirschner and Erkens, 2011). A more thorough look at these aspects will be considered across sections 8.3 and 8.5 when the studies within this thesis will be compared. The main points raised

based on the demographics of the participants loaded onto this factor include the absence of presence from students enrolled at the university in the Midlands and that those who are studying Sports Studies have remained clustered within this factor. Utilising figure 24 (chapter 6) there is a pattern of clustering with 6 out of 9 statements of origin from the paper by Harvey (2001), these are represented by light yellow on the Q-Sort. Although the paper by Harvey (2001) has been conceptualised within Appendix A as portraying Employability from a Higher Education approach, 2 of the statements that have been positioned at the far-right side of the Q-Sort imply an industry approach to Employability with use of words and phrases such as 'recruitment' and 'attributes that a type of employer specifies'. These statements have therefore been given strength of agreement amongst the participants within this factor. This is also apparent in the work of Pierce (2002) which is represented in figure 39 by statements 10-13. Aside from statement 10, the remaining 3 statements by Pierce (2002) have remained tightly clustered together under columns 2 and 3 which demonstrates a strong level of agreement from those loaded onto this factor. As this is an idealised Q-Sort and therefore does not portray the exact level of perception for each participant there are some deviants within the idealised Q-Sort, such as statement 30 which is listed in column 2 as this goes against the labelling of this factor. This deviant statement symbolises that this statement holds strength of agreement across the participants loaded against this factor but has not been deemed strong enough to be categorised into a column holding significant strength.

8.2.2 DISCUSSION: STUDY 2: FACTOR B

The label given to those participants within Factor B of study 2 is:

"Employability is not a one size fits all concept and can be individualised based upon the required skills and attributes determined by HEI's".

An idealised Q-Sort shows a representation of how similar views are shared across a cluster of participants around the perception of Employability (figure 26, chapter 6). There is evidence from the placement of the statements that justify the labelling of this factor and therefore portraying a shared view focussed on the role that Higher Education plays when creating an individualised approach to the concept of Employability. The statements provided within this study add further rationale for how this factor has been labelled and this is evident through some of the statements provided which are as follows:

"The skills you possess will enable you to be efficient within employment" (18c-nw).

"Understanding my skills is important for me, as I can then use this to align my skillsets to the type of job I am looking to secure" (37cd-mid).

"I recognise that other aspects of my university life can assist in highlighting and developing my skills and showing they are transferable. For example, I anticipate that my social skills will develop at university and not just from being in a classroom environment, but via the social interactions I have as part of life as a student" (5cd-nw).

"The skills that are highlighted for development by my university will allow me to become a better coach when the time comes" (7cd-nw).

"It is not the responsibility of universities to get a job, but it is their responsibility to let me know what skills I need to work on so my chances of getting a job improve" (36cd-mid).

The quotes provided demonstrate how the labelling of this factor has emerged. The participants loaded against this factor show their awareness of individual skills required for employment but also how the role of Higher Education can also dictate this. Within this study, this factor was loaded the heaviest with 46% of the participants loading onto factor B. Table 36 demonstrates the demographics of those loaded against Factor B in study 2. The demographical information displayed in table 36 shows that there is representation for each course in this factor except for those studying BA (Hons) Sports Management and BA (Hons) Sports Studies.

Table 36 – Study 2: Factor B: Participant Demographics

Participant Identifier	HEI (NW=North West, Mid = Midlands)	Course Title	Gender
4cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
5cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
7cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
10cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
11cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
15c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
18c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	F
20c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
21c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
24c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
25c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
26c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
30ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	F
31ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	F
34ss-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Science	M
36cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	F
37cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
39cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M

* Standalone Employability Modules

The participants studying Sports Studies are already represented within Factor A of this study, so this explains the lack of representation within this factor. 66% of this study is represented by participants who study on courses that include standalone Employability modules so it is expected across each factor there will be a large representation of courses highlighted in red as seen in table 36. This factor within study 2 shows the largest representation with 18 of the 39 participants being loaded onto this factor. As there are no participants within this study that belong to a programme which only features in this factor, there is no obvious reason why the participants perceive Employability in the way they do. The common ground shared between these participants removes the idea that perception is developed based on whether the concept of Employability is taught as a standalone module or embedded as there is representation within this factor for both, but the common ground is nothing more than the perception itself. Based on the labelling of this factor, figure 26 (chapter 6) will be utilised to assess how the participants of factor B have agreed or disagreed with complete statements of origin as placed on the idealised Q-Sort. A statement of origin displayed in figure 40 would be that of Yorke (2006) which is represented by the statements in bright green. Within this factor the statement originating from the work of Yorke (2006) is more clustered from the centre to the right side of the Q-Sort showing that there is more agreement with this statement than what has been seen in other statements. However, the fact these statements are not closely clustered demonstrates contention between participant perceptions and those from Yorke (2006). In contrast the statements within figure 40 that are represented by the colour violet (statements 25-28) are spread across the Q-Sort but 2 of the 4 statements are closely clustered together under column 2, showing that participants concur with some of the statements by Bowden *et al.* (2000) and that they have been allocated significance by their placement on the far right. The placement of statements on the far right add justification to how this factor has been labelled as there are combinations of individual importance but also the role of Higher Education when it comes to the concept of Employability. The idea of Employability being conceptualised between Higher Education and individuality is not uncommon and is widely recognised within literature (Tomlinson, 2012; Trought, 2012; Yorke, 2006; Knight and Yorke, 2003; Harvey, Locke and Morey, 2002). The idea of a relational concept is also evident within the findings that have emerged from this factor.

8.2.3 DISCUSSION: STUDY 2: FACTOR C

The label given to those participants within Factor C of study 2 is:

"Employability is focussed on personal awareness of individual capability, attitude, and the realisation of potential with the understanding that based upon this, Employability can hold different meanings for everyone".

An idealised Q-Sort shows a representation of how similar views are shared across a cluster of participants around the perception of Employability (figure 28, chapter 6). There is evidence from the placement of the statements that justify the labelling of this factor and therefore portraying a shared view focussed on the awareness of individuals when considering the concept of Employability. The participant comments provided within this study add further rationale for how this factor has been labelled and this is evident through some of the statements provided which are as follows:

"With Employability is it important to not be complacent and want to continually learn and develop otherwise you can get left behind and maybe can't keep up with the pace of the industry you are part of" (2sm-nw).

"Attitude and willingness is a key part of Employability in my opinion as this is needed as a first step towards anything" (12cd-nw).

"Employers may advertise what they want and you may have these but that doesn't set you apart from anyone else. This is the point where individual qualities and characteristics start to become more important, these are what differentiate ones Employability to another" (22c-nw).

"Education can only take you so far, it can give you the foundations to build on but more is needed from me" (14c-nw).

"It is needed to pay for things, seems quite an obvious question really that employment is needed" (38cd-mid).

"You don't go to work to reflect, you go to work and earn a living. Employability is needed to afford things" (3cd-nw).

The statements provided for this factor add further context to the perceptions of those loaded against this factor. From the statements provided there are also differences between the participants within this factor which are highlighted by the way they speak about Employability. For instance, the quotes provided from participants 2sm-nw, 12cd-nw and 22c-nw mention attitude, qualities and characteristics being part of how Employability is perceived, but when compared with the quotes from 38cd-mid and 3cd-nw, it appears Employability is being classified as Employment. The commentary provided demonstrates that there is often confusion amongst students in relation to terminology used and that Employability and Employment are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably amongst some. Even though these participants have been classified as belonging to the same factor within this study there are still clear differences from within the factor and therefore further scrutiny is required to assess if there are any demographical differences amongst these participants. Table 37 shows the demographics of those labelled against this factor within this study.

Table 37 – Study 2: Factor C: Participant Demographics

Participant Identifier	HEI (NW=North West, Mid = Midlands)	Course Title	Gender
1sm-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Management	M
2sm-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Management	F
3cd -NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
12cd-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
14c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
16c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
19c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
22c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	M
23c-NW	NW	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching	F
35cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M
38cd-MID	Mid	BA (Hons) Sports Coaching & Development	M

* Standalone Employability Modules

Table 37 highlights that there is a bigger representation for those studying at the university in the Northwest, but as mentioned earlier, this is expected due to most participants being enrolled at the university in the Northwest. When assessing the courses of the participants labelled against this factor there is an interesting find with those studying Sports Management. Throughout this entire study only 2 participants represent BA (Hons) Sports Management, so to see them loaded onto the same factor is a point of interest. It is also worth noting that those studying Sports Management also don't have a standalone module for Employability. Overby (2011) suggests that if people cannot see an obvious marker of Employability development there is a natural curiosity to begin self-exploration in relation to Employability. The statement by Overby implies that creating a sense of independence and personal accountability for Employability could be expected of those who do not have specific Employability modules delivered to them. This idea relates also to the research of Ryan and Deci (2000) who refer to a student led approach to teaching and learning can often aid in the cognitive development of students, specifically referring to attitude, proactiveness and responsibility. This view contributes to the fact there are 7 participants within this factor that are enrolled on programmes who deliver standalone Employability modules. When this is compared to factors A and B in this study, this factor is represented by the smallest number of participants from those courses therefore creating an argument that for those who are delivered Employability specific content, the need for accountability is not as great.

When assessing the gender split within this factor, the expectation of having a male dominated factor is present due to the overall gender split within this study, therefore there is nothing of relevance from a gender perspective within this factor. Utilising figure 28 (chapter 6), as with the factors preceding this one, there is evidence of very little clustering in relation to statement origins but there is evidence of agreement with aspects of statements, even if there is not agreement with the entirety of a statements origin. As expected, based on the labelling of this factor there are many statements placed on the far-right side of the Q-Sort that mention aspects of individuality. An example of this would be the statements that have originated from the work of DHFETE (2002) which is represented by the statements highlighted by the colour mustard (statements 16, 37-39). Although there is a spread of these statements across the Q-Sort, the 2 statements that have been agreed with mention 'individual' whilst the remaining 2 statements from DHFETE (2002)

do not and have therefore been placed in the centre and towards the left of the Q-Sort. Unlike the statement from DHFETE which has been conceptualised as a relational concept between industry and individuals (appendix A), the statements that originate from the work of Dacre-Pool and Sewell (2007) which has been conceptualised from an individual perspective has therefore been wholly agreed with by those in this factor. The statements from Dacre-Pool and Sewell (2007) which are represented in light blue (statements 9 and 34) have been tightly clustered together under columns 3 and 5 and therefore showing a level of significant agreement with this work in alignment with their own views on Employability. As with each factor that has been discussed prior to this one, understanding how the more prominent views within literature have been placed in this factor is important, the work by Yorke (2002) has been largely split towards the neutral column and the left of this Q-Sort, but there are 2 statements that have been deemed significant within this loading. The statements from Yorke (statements 52 and 2) that have been placed under column 4 arguably align the closest to the labelling of this factor and therefore feels as though the positioning of these statements is correct, but it could be argued that statement 4 which has been placed in the -3 column also aligns to the labelling of this factor but has not been deemed significant in this factor. This could be explained by the fact this is an idealised Q-Sort and that not all participants in this factor would place this statement in that column, but the fact it has been placed there means it has been deemed to hold less weight than other statements in this factor.

8.2.4 SUMMARY: STUDY 2

Like the findings from study 1, there are 3 emergent factors that have materialised from the analysis of this study. But unlike study 1, they do not completely align to the QAA model (2014) and therefore do not align completely with the views of the participants (staff) who featured in study 1. It could be viewed that obtaining different outcomes from 2 different populations is expected and this is correct, but when there are differences in 2 different populations that must work together, this could cause confusion and misinterpretation. Although the findings within this study do not completely align there are still some similarities and perhaps even more diversity within the findings from study 2.   The 3 themes that have emerged from this factor include an industry approach to Employability, an individual and higher education hybrid approach to Employability and sole individual approach to the concept of Employability.   When assessing all the factors together within this study, an observation to note is that within Factor A there is a cluster of participants who have studied Sports Studies that do not appear in any other factor, therefore indicating a dominant view of Employability for participants who study this subject. Following a similar pattern are those participants who study Sports Management as they only feature within factor C, again therefore portraying that those who study this subject perceive Employability against the label created for Factor C. As mentioned in previous sections of this chapter, sample size must be considered as the participants representing both Sports Studies and Sports Management consisted of only 2 participants per programme. The awareness that has been shown from the participants within this study does align to most literature and from at least 1 conceptualisation of Employability. The foundations of understanding perception within this study allowed for a simple comparison moving into the 3rd and final study of this thesis as it allowed for a comparable understanding to be assessed with the conclusion of their student journey. The findings from this study will hold even more importance when evaluating the findings from study 3 in relation to if any of these perceptions changed or remained the same throughout their university experience with further evaluation from the findings in study 1 to ascertain the impact of staff perceptions during that time.

8.3 COMPARISONS: STUDY 1 AND 2

Although differences between studies 1 and 2 is expected, further exploration is needed to identify the similarities and disparities across the findings from these studies based upon the interactions and possible relationships created between participants in study 1 and study 2. For clarity, the participants within Study 1 represent Higher Education staff who either teach or hold specific roles across different sport courses in relation to Employability, whilst the participants within study 2 are represented by students who are studying on those sports courses. When comparing the findings across both studies it is important to be clear on what findings emerged from each study. Table 38 has been included to show the findings across studies 1 and 2, with Table 39 showing how the findings have been conceptualised in alignment with literature as evidenced in Appendix A.

Table 38 – Comparison of Findings: Studies 1 and 2

	Study 1	Study 2
Factor A	Employability is driven by the individual	Employability is obtaining and maintaining employment by possessing qualities and attributes that employers specify
Factor B	Employability is driven by Higher Education with an appreciation for the complexities involved	Employability is not a one size fits all concept and can be individualised based upon the required skills and attributes determined by HEI's
Factor C	Employability is industry driven and the contributions that can be made to society and communities	Employability is focussed on personal awareness of individual capability, attitude, and the realisation of potential with the understanding that based upon this, Employability can hold different meanings for everyone

Table 39 – Studies 1 and 2: Conceptualisation of Findings

	Study 1			Study 2		
	Conceptualisations					
	Industry	HEIs	Individual	Industry	HEIs	Individual
Factor A			x	x		
Factor B		x			x	x
Factor C	x					x

As seen in table 38 and 39 the findings from both studies highlighted 3 distinct factors which represent 3 distinct shared views in relation to Employability. Table 39 shows how each of these factors have been conceptualised and therefore align with not only literature but also the QAA model (2014). As can be seen in table 39, study 1 aligns identically to the conceptualisations that appear via the QAA model (2014) and although it could be argued there is a similar pattern across study 2, there are also differences. Study 2 highlights shared understanding within Factor B about Employability being conceptualised to consider multiple stakeholders. This view is not anything new, as most of Employability literature features relational conceptualisations for Employability (Bridgstock, 2009; Brown, Hesketh and Williams, 2003; Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen, 1998; DHFETE, 2002; Harvey, Locke and Morey, 2002; Hillage and Pollard, 1998; HM Treasury, 1997; Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser, 2013; Knight and Yorke, 2003; Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert, 2020; Stephenson, 1998; Tomlinson, 2012; Trought, 2012; Tymon, 2013 and Yorke, 2006). With most of the literature featuring some component of a relational conceptualisation of Employability, it is perhaps surprising to see only 1 of the 6 viewpoints showing an obvious awareness of the concept of Employability being relational. There are hints of additional consideration within some of the statements provided from the participants across studies 1 and 2, but these views in relation to their Q-Sort constructions were not deemed significant enough to justify a relational approach to the labelling of these factors, apart from Factor B within study 2. Aside from the variance of Factor B within study 2, there is a clear alignment of shared views capturing multiple conceptualisations when considering the meaning of Employability.

Figure 36 – Participant Interactions: Studies 1 and 2
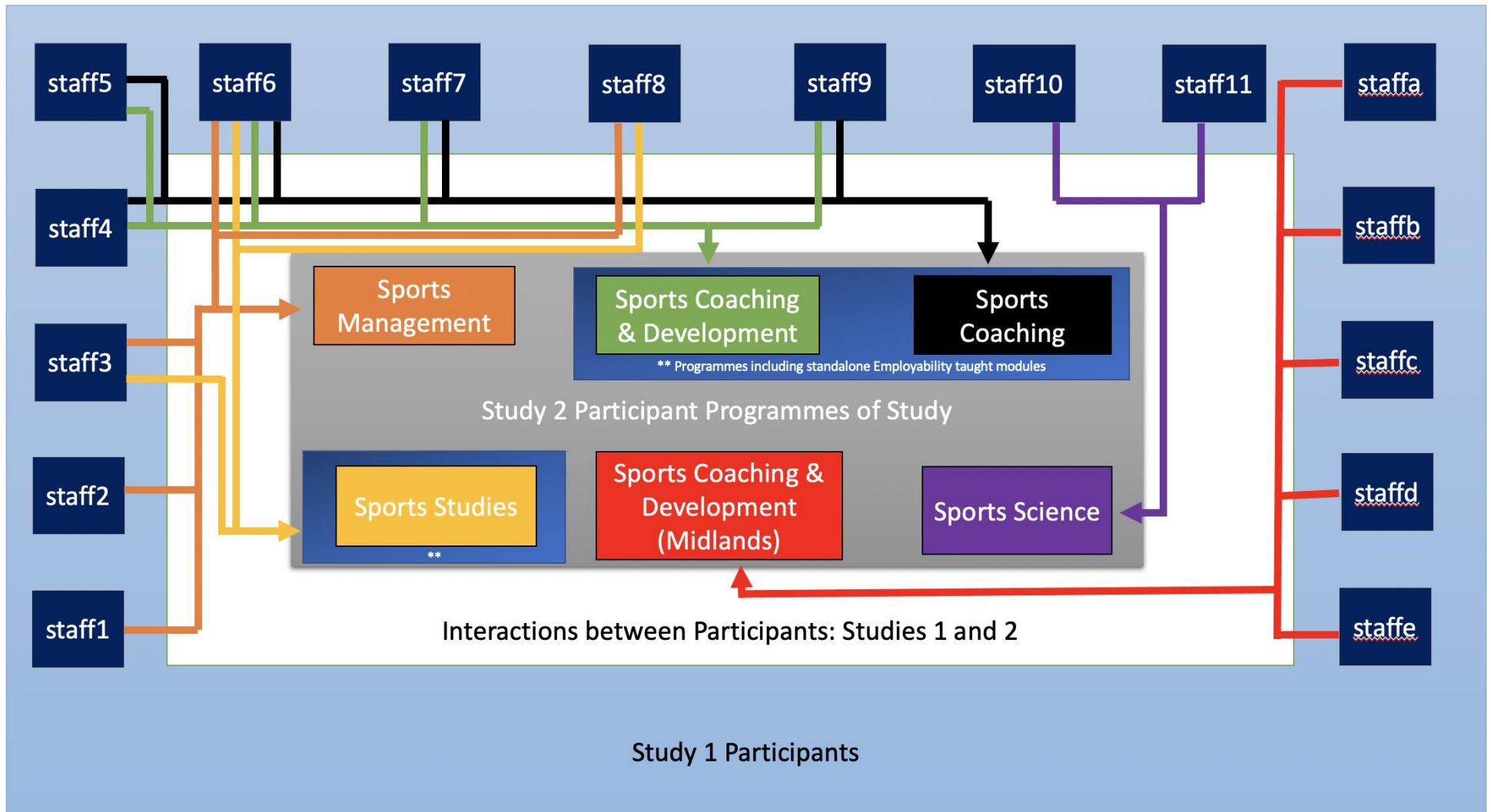
To make sense of this further, it is important to understand the relationships and interactions that occurred between the participants within study 1 and study 2. Figure 36 demonstrates the relationship and interactions between each participant within study 1 and their interactivity with the programmes of study to which those participants in study 2 were enrolled during their undergraduate university experience. The purpose of utilising information like that within figure 36 is to assess whether the view of those within study 1 have influenced those within study 2. Although every effort was made to capture this data as close to the beginning of their university education, the data was captured within the first 2 months of the commencement of their undergraduate journey, therefore their interactions with staff were frequent for anywhere between 6-8 weeks prior to any data being collected. The purpose of figure 36 is not only to show interactions but also to offer justification and explanation if staff and students who have interacted are loaded onto a factor that share the same conceptualisation. Equally the information within figure 36 can also rule out connections between staff and students who share similar views but have no interaction at all. Figure 36 uses colour coding to represent the links between the courses studied by the participants within study 2 and the staff from study 1 who had already or are likely to interact with those participants. To explain figure 36, Sports Management will be used as an example. Sports Management has been colour coded as orange, therefore any orange line that traces to a staff member represents interactions between those staff members and their involvement in that programme of study. The relevance of this is to use this information to assess influence and shared views, some of which will hold more value when assessing and comparing the findings from study 3 in section 8.5. To assess more thoroughly if there are potential factors of influence between participants across both studies it is important to align the conceptualisations across studies 1 and 2. Table 40 demonstrates alignment between the factors that have emerged from each study.

Table 40 – Studies 1 and 2: Conceptualisation Alignment

Study 1		Study 2	Conceptualisation
Factor A		Factor C and B	Individual
Factor B	aligns with	Factor B	HEIs
Factor C		Factor A	Industry

The information within table 40 now allows for further exploration to assess the connections of influence between the participants based on factor loading and interactions as evidenced within figure 36.

Table 41 – Studies 1 and 2: Assessing influence via Conceptualised Factor Loading

		Conceptualisations	
	Individual	HEIs	Industry
Study 1	staff1, staff4, staff10, staffb, staffc, staffd	staff2, staff3, staff7, staff8, staff9, staff11, staffa, staffe	staff5, staff6
	Factor A	Factor B	Factor C
Study 2	1sm-NW, 2sm-NW, 4cd-NW, 5cd-NW, 7cd-NW, 10cd-NW, 11cd-NW, 3cd-NW, 12cd-NW, 15c-NW, 18c-NW, 20c-NW, 21c-NW, 24c-NW, 25c-NW, 26c-NW, 14c-NW, 16c-NW, 19c-NW, 22c-NW, 30ss-NW, 31ss-NW, 34ss-NW, 36cd-MID, 37cd-MID, 39cd-MID, 35cd-MID, 38cd-MID	4cd-NW, 5cd-NW, 7cd-NW, 10cd-NW, 11cd-NW, 15c-NW, 18c-NW, 20c-NW, 21c-NW, 24c-NW, 25c-NW, 26c-NW, 30ss-NW, 31ss-NW, 34ss-NW, 36cd-MID, 37cd-MID, 39cd-MID	6cd-NW, 8cd-NW, 9cd-NW, 13c-NW, 17c-NW, 23c-NW, 27st-NW, 28st-NW, 29ss-NW, 32ss-NW, 33ss-NW,
	Factor C and B	Factor B	Factor A

The colour coding that was utilised within figure 36 has been replicated within table 41 to enable an easier way to identify links between staff from study 1 and students from study 2. When evaluating the views shared by those who have conceptualised Employability from an individual (Study1: Factor A, Study2: Factors C and B) there are clear links of possible influence between the 2 participant groups (staff and student). The students who conceptualise Employability from an individual perspective have interacted with at least one member of staff who shares similar views in relation to the concept of Employability. The relevance of this is the potential influence from those in study 1 to those in study 2, as De Hei (2016) suggests within this study that university staff not only have an influence on engagement but also the perceptions and beliefs of those they teach. The notion of influence changing perception is one that is shared throughout literature (Evans and Kozhevnikova, 2011; Fransen, Kirschner and Erkens, 2011). Although some of the findings from the studies within

this thesis align to that of literature there are still questions related to the findings that don't align with literature. This is evident within the remaining 2 conceptualisations of Employability as seen in table 41. Participants staff3 and staff6 indicate that there is interactivity with participants who are studying BA (Hons) Sports Studies, but when looking at those participants who conceptualise Employability from a HEI perspective, there are no participants sharing this view from that programme of study and therefore inciting that no influence has occurred from these 2 members of staff on those who study on that programme and are part of this research. However, when addressing those who conceptualise Employability from an industry perspective, those who are representing the student cohort for BA (Hons) Sports Studies have only conceptualised Employability from this viewpoint and do not feature elsewhere. When combining this with links to staff members there is only one participant who would interact with these participants within that programme of study (staff6). This indicates that the likelihood of the influence between staff6, 27st-NW and 28st-NW is highly likely in relation to Employability perception. Another example is between all participants highlighted in red as this shows perfect alignment between staff and student perception. The way in which participants staffa, staffb, staffc, staffd and staffe have viewed Employability is shared by those participants they have or would interact with at some point. This table highlights that although there are some slight differences in the way Employability is conceptualised, the research has in fact created another finding beyond the initial emergence of study specific factors. Comparing studies 1 and 2 has gone 1 step further and instead of only looking for shared viewpoints amongst participants from specific cohorts, it is evident that there is value in comparing emergent factors across studies and not just within them. The findings from these comparisons show that the impact of staff on students is present and that this influence is used to build upon subjective viewpoints across concepts such as Employability. This finding is important and will be utilised again during section 8.5 when including the findings from study 3.

8.4 DISCUSSION: STUDY 3

Unlike the previous studies within this thesis, study 3 includes an additional method of data collection, a semi structured interview. The purpose of including this method at this stage is to capture information that goes beyond the Q-Sort and therefore allows an evaluation of how the participants within this study feel Employability impacted on their engagement with their programmes of study. In line with the previous studies, Q Methodology is used again but for this study, it is utilised for context and to allow deeper discussions when conducting the semi structured interview. When assessing the findings from study 3 alongside objective 4 it is safe to say that each participant has had a different educational journey, regardless of the programme they studied. There are clear differences of influence and interactions between the participants and their university, and this is evident within the interview responses. As mentioned, Q Methodology was utilised again in this study but more for contextual purposes and although the sample size has significantly reduced there is representation for every programme included within study 2. The exception here is the university in the Midlands, as this university does not feature in this study and was never planned to be, only the participants studying at the Northwest University are part of study 3 in line with the longitudinal plan for this thesis. All participants who were studying at the University in the Northwest were invited to be part of this final study, but due to multiple reasons (withdrawals, interruptions, repeated years, no response) only 8 of the 34 eligible participants responded and agreed to be part of this final study. Upon the completion of factor analysis within this study, only 1 factor emerged. It could be argued that sample size impacted on this outcome but as Brown (1980) states the aim of Q-Methodology is to understand shared viewpoints and investigate the nature of those commonalities, therefore, providing there are enough participants to compare against, this is suitable and is classified as Multiple-participant design (Watts and Stenner, 2012). As with the preceding studies, there is a place for Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) to be considered within the findings of this study due to understanding the impact of influence, but there is also a place within this study for Self-Concept Theory and Protean Career Theory. Self-Concept Theory (S-ConT) was developed by Super (1981) and is heavily underpinned by the notion of time and experience altering perceptions and that this is a natural occurrence within someone's life. The theory by Super (1981) is particularly pertinent within this study as the participants were asked to

reflect on their university experience and comment on how that has impacted their current trajectory as a graduate. The introduction of Protean Career Theory (PCT) also has a place within this study, as this theoretical concept is based on the idea that individuals are in the driving seat and are therefore accountable and responsible for their own destinations. PCT is extremely valuable within this study as numerous studies have mentioned the use of PCT and the value it can bring to those when taking ownership of one's own learning (Fitzpatrick, 2020; Noorbhai, 2020; Ullah and Wilson, 2007). Throughout this section, these theoretical concepts will be brought to the forefront when there is evidence of these theories playing a role in the findings. Within the upcoming sections 8.4.1 – 8.4.2 the emergent factor will be discussed to understand the shared view between the participants within this study before moving onto the findings within the responses from the semi structured interviews.

8.4.1 DISCUSSION: STUDY 3: FACTOR A

The label given to those participants within Factor A of study 3 is:

"Employability is individual awareness of personal skills and competencies that can benefit industry, but with the understanding that these skills are transferable and therefore allow for easier mobility across sectors".

Although the idealised Q-Sort does not reflect each individual Q-Sort per participant, the idea behind this approach is to create an idealised view of how those loaded against this factor perceive Employability. The labelling of this factor aligns very well to the idea of Protean Career Theory as it shows an element of individual ownership towards the concept of Employability. There is clear evidence from the placement of the statements that justify the labelling of this factor and therefore portraying a shared view focussed on individual accountability, awareness and the need to consider the value this can bring to industry when it comes to the concept of Employability. Unlike the previous studies within this thesis, there is no commentary for this Q-Sort, as an additional Q-Sort was only completed to aid discussion in the semi structured interviews and to assess whether they agreed with not only their newly constructed Q-Sort but also the one completed as a 1st year undergraduate student. An

interesting find from the analysis of the study 3 Q-Sorts was that all except 1 participant loaded onto 1 factor, therefore portraying a shared view of Employability with 88% of the participant population in this study. To assess the differences/similarities between the Q-Sort constructions that featured within study 2 and those in this study, a good starting point is to ascertain which factors these 8 participants were loaded onto within study 2. Table 42 is a replica of table 31 which features in chapter 7 (7.5) to show participant factor loading across the studies.

Table 42 – Participant Factor Loading Study 2 vs Study 3

Participant	Study 2 Loading	Study 3 Loading
6cd-nw	A	A
27st-nw	A	Not Loaded
7cd-nw	B	A
15c-nw	B	A
31ss-nw	B	A
2sm-nw	C	A
19c-nw	C	A
22c-nw	C	A

** Part of a programme that delivered standalone Employability Modules

Table 42 demonstrates that there is a good representation for each factor loading from study 2 with those participants included within this study. As evident within table 42, participant 27st-nw was not loaded onto a factor within this study as the analysis classified the views of this participant as not being similar enough to be loaded onto Factor A, but also not dissimilar enough to be deemed another factor for the purposes of comparison. Based on the rationale of participant 27st-nw not being loaded onto Factor A or being classified as another factor, it could be argued that this implies a view that is similar to those in Factor A, but just didn't hold enough significance to be loaded, this is a plausible assumption. When assessing the labelling of this factor and aligning it to the conceptualisations highlighted in tables 40 and 41 there appears to be a relational conceptualisation within the labelling of this factor which includes consideration for individual and industry.

Figure 37 - Idealised Q-Sort Factor A – Q Set Dissection: Study 3

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Important for higher education institutes but not the student (55)	The beliefs of a higher education institute (27)	Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts (21)	About the individuals characteristics (17)	The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment (19)	The capacity of a graduate to function in a job (8)	The attitude and personal attributes of an individual (39)	Being prepared for employment (11)	Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes (44)	The capability to move into and within labour markets (37)	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers (33)
Not my responsibility (59)	Securing any job (40)	Graduates obtaining jobs (10)	An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment (43)	Obtaining meaningful employment (36)	Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning (53)	Important for higher education institutes (56)	Benefiting the individual (4)	Complex (51)	The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market (16)	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (35)
A tick box exercise (50)	Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating (42)	Dependent on the state of the labour market (18)	Maintaining employment (15)	Being successful within a chosen occupation (3)	Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a students time at the institute (28)	Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning (46)	The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning (45)	Skills, understanding and personal attributes (2)	The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual (38)	The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process (31)
	Not needed (54)	Getting a graduate level job (41)	A marketing tool for higher education (58)	The responsibility of higher education institutions (23)	Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills (13)	More than the requirements of employers (30)	An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job (49)	Important for the student more so than the higher education institute (57)	The acquisition of skills for life (22)	
		Gaining initial employment (14)	The possession of basic core skills (47)	Gaining work experience (12)	More than the possession of generic skills (29)	The realisation of his/her potential in work (34)	Benefitting the community (6)	Holds different meanings for different people (52)		
			A set of achievements (1)	Preparing graduates for success (24)	Benefiting the workforce (5)	A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies (48)	Knowledge and understanding of career management skills (32)			
				Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen (25)	Self-awareness and reflection (9)	Benefitting the economy (7)				
					A set of graduate attributes (26)					
					The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems (20)					

NB: Shared colours represent statements that originate from the same literature source.

275

Considering the context in which these participants are part of this research (education) it is somewhat surprising to see that graduates have not included consideration for Education when defining Employability. Understanding how an idealised Q-Sort has been constructed for this factor is important. Figure 37 is a copy of figure 35 which is located in chapter 7 (7.4) showing how statements of origin have been dissected from the participants loaded against this factor. An obvious point to make is the clustering of statements under column 4 that originate from the research conducted by DHFETE (2002). When assessing the research by DHFETE (2002) and their approach to the conceptualisation of Employability (Appendix A) there is a clear alignment between DHFETE and the participants loaded onto this factor as both share a relational viewpoint considering Industry and Individual. Although this factor largely aligns to a relational conceptualisation of Employability, there is still the need to address the lack of Higher Education from the views of those loaded onto this factor. As with the previous studies it is important to understand the level of agreement between the participants and the established key figures within the field of Employability. The work by Yorke (2006) is represented by those statements in green and although the statements are contained between columns 3 to -2, there are still areas of contention with aspects of the work of Yorke (2006), but there is strong agreement with aspects of his work which focus on the individual and their personal attributes. This level of agreement is mirrored via the placement of statements 33 and 35 which speak of the need to develop skills and possess competencies that will allow them to enter and remain in employment whilst also meeting the needs of employers (Hillage and Pollard, 1998; Hm Treasury, 1997). An idealised Q-Sort cannot provide an absolute accurate picture of the views of each individual so there are flaws and although there may be statements that are placed further right or further left and potentially add complications to the labelling of this factor, fundamentally the message of a relational conceptualisation is evident and present within this idealised Q-Sort. Without the commentary for this Q-Sort it is difficult to understand why Education has not featured prominently in the views of these graduates, but this will be addressed within section 8.4.2 when more light is shed on why that might be when the participants reflect on their student journey but this time, through the eyes of graduates.

8.4.2 DISCUSSION: STUDY 3: SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

When assessing the content provided within the responses of the Semi Structured Interview it is wise to look at the views of these participants when they were students (study 2) to compare if there are differences as a graduate. Although table 42 highlights the differences across these participants within study 2, it is only telling us that all except 1 have been classified as loading onto the 1 factor in this study, it therefore does not indicate a perception shift. To understand if there has been a shift in perception, it is worth assessing the conceptualisations of these factors, and this is evidenced in table 43.

Table 43 – Participant Factor Loading Study 2 vs Study 3 Conceptualisations

Participant	Study 2 Loading	Study 2 Conceptualisation	Study 3 Loading	Study 3 Conceptualisation
6cd-nw	A	Industry	A	Industry and Individual
27st-nw	A	Industry	Not Loaded	Not Loaded
7cd-nw	B	HEIs and Individual	A	Industry and Individual
15c-nw	B	HEIs and Individual	A	Industry and Individual
31ss-nw	B	HEIs and Individual	A	Industry and Individual
2sm-nw	C	Individual	A	Industry and Individual
19c-nw	C	Individual	A	Industry and Individual
22c-nw	C	Individual	A	Industry and Individual

** Part of a programme that delivered standalone Employability Modules

Based on the conceptualisations highlighted in table 43 it could be stated that although there appears to have been shifts across the entire study population, there are signs that there has been an awareness of the conceptualisations that are apparent within the findings of study 3. Every individual who has been loaded onto Factor A in this study demonstrated an awareness of either industry or individual approaches to Employability, so the findings are not unexpected. However, what is an interesting find is that all participants, with the exception of 27st-NW, are sharing a similar viewpoint on Employability as graduates. The change in only 1 emergent factor highlights the need for the semi structured interviews to not only understand why these perceptions have started to align but to also assess based on their responses, how these experiences impacted on their engagement with Employability as

a student. The following sections will utilise themes to which questions were asked to formulate how the responses compare across the participants within this study. Although participant 27st-NW is not loaded onto Factor A, their interview responses will still be included within the upcoming sections.

8.4.2.1 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: EMPLOYABILITY RECOLLECTIONS

In the opening stages of the semi structured interviews the participants were asked about their recollections of Employability during their 1st year as an undergraduate student. The responses received from this question was varied but seemed to highlight 3 thematic responses; engaged with the concept, not engaged with the concept, not explicitly thought about. Participants 7cd-NW and 22c-NW stated that they engaged and enjoyed the modules related to Employability as it gave them a break from content specific modules and was nice to experience a module that was about them. Although the views of these participants were positive, they did also comment that they could see some of the content wasn't the most thrilling and understood why some students chose to switch off.

> *"Some of the content wasn't the most thrilling but I could see the value in some but not all, this could be due to my age at the time" (7cd-NW).*

The views on the type of content are also mentioned by those who stated their engagement was minimal or non-existent. Participants 6cd-NW, 15c-NW, 19c-NW and 27st-NW all admitted their lack of interest towards the topic of Employability within their first year at University. All the participants who didn't engage with the concept spoke of the content being boring but did state that if this has been contextualised towards sport, this may have altered their engagement levels.

> *"For me it just felt like boring content, so maybe if there was a way to bring it to life through sport for example then it perhaps would of caught my attention" (6cd-NW).*

In contrast to this, participants 2sm-NW and 31ss-NW who were both enrolled on programmes that did not include standalone Employability modules commented on the fact

278

that because it was not so explicitly stated, Employability was quietly being developed in the background. This approach was commended by these participants but did also state that they believe their individual personal awareness of their development was good and therefore could of also played some part.

> *"I think because Employability was in the background of the subjects we were learning, it is not something I actually thought about. I remember in some of the module handbooks it would say things like develop critical self-awareness and reflection, and then we would have an assessment that would be graded to see if this had been developed" (31ss-NW).*

Although this information is a reflective account, it does bring some useful insight in relation to the constructors within study 2 but also creates an initial benchmark of Employability understanding at the very early stages of an academic journey. An interesting observation is the shared view between participants 2sm-NW and 31ss-NW who are the only participants within this study who were not taught on specific Employability based modules. The comments made by these 2 participants show that although Employability was not an obvious concept via a taught module, they still had awareness of how it was being developed and the role they played in this. Protean Career Theory is based on the premise of individual drive and motivation when wanting to succeed, these 2 participants at this stage of the interview were showing their individual awareness and as a researcher was highlighting how PCT had been in action at such an early stage of an educational journey. For those students who stated their engagement was minimal this perhaps aligns to student motivation which directly links with engagement. Groves *et al.* (2015) reported that student motivation was a significant factor and suggested that degree students need to increase their perceived competence within academic tasks at the earliest opportunity. Within their research Groves *et al.* (2015) highlighted that staff-student relationship building is crucial and their research emphasised this even further since the introduction of increased tuition fees. Aldcroft (2011) shared similar views to the research that has emerged from Groves *et al.* who concludes that tutor interaction can significantly impact on the psychological components that are prevalent factors within student engagement. Groves *et al.* (2015) strongly concluded that student-tutor interactions have become one of the most significant factors for encouraging student

engagement. This is particularly relevant because how can relationships be built between student and tutor if there is reduced engagement and therefore possibly low attendance.

8.4.2.2 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: RECOLLECTIONS OF CHANGES IN PERCEPTION

When the participants were asked about specific periods throughout their student journey in which they recalled any change in their perceptions of Employability, again there appeared to be 3 themes that emerged from the responses; Time naturally passing, consistent views that barely altered and specific examples that highlighted a turning point. Participant 19c-NW was the only participant who elaborated on an example of interacting with alumni in year 2 and hearing their story. This interaction led this participant to explore his own development and search for ways to improve themselves and the following example was given:

"One example I can give is that I always thought I was a confident person, but I was surprised to see that sometimes this was coming across as arrogance. When I think about how that could come across to an employer and potentially hamper my career progress, that was a real worry, so I would definitely say my awareness was heightened. I started to look for chances to become more confident but in the right way and this meant I started putting myself forward for more opportunities" (19c-NW).

This example by participant 19c-NW demonstrates the use of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) due to the impact of influence and how this altered the way in which someone starts to think of themselves. This question highlighted how potentially other theories were evident throughout the student experience. An example of this is from those participants who signalled that when their studies were nearing the end, there was an element of panic and thoughts about life after University (Participants 2sm-NW, 6cd-NW, 15c-NW and 27st-NW). Some of the participants did mention that they believed their thoughts on Employability was a natural manifestation of time passing by, which aligns with Self-Concept Theory as this is based on the theory that perceptions and beliefs naturally alter over

time and the experiences encountered during that time. The idea of panicking was evident in the responses of participants 6cd-NW and 15c-NW as this was the term that was used. In relation to terminology participant 15c-NW mentioned about the need to gain employment, and when asked whether this impacts on the way they thought about Employability they responded with the following:

> *"As I said, getting a job was getting closer so thinking about how I would do that and what I would need to do was also in my mind, but for me Employability is still ultimately employment"* (15c-NW).

This statement demonstrates that employment and Employability was being used interchangeably as terminology and this was evident also in the findings within study 2. This misuse of terminology indicates that although some participants feel there has been a development of understanding in relation to Employability, there is still an element of confusion present. This would not be helped if receiving mixed messages about Employability as this was commented on by participant 7cd-NW, who mentioned the numerous tutors who had numerous views on Employability and therefore this impacted on content delivery. The role of the university was highlighted by not only this participant but also participant 22c-NW who explained that Employability seemed quite instructional and therefore it was implied that the University knew best and therefore students continued on the paths in which Universities guided them down.

> *"I think my awareness was ok in regard to Employability but my faith in the university and my belief that they would steer me in the right direction was there. Not completely convinced that, that is what I should have done but I did and perhaps even allowed the uni to take more control than I should of"* (7cd-NW).

8.4.2.3 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: STUDENT V GRADUATE Q-SORT COMPARISON

Asking the participants to compare their original Q-Sorts to the most recent ones proved important and was a useful tool for discussion. All the participants who were loaded onto Factor A in this study, agreed with the labelling of the factor except for participant 27st-NW who held similar beliefs to the findings in their original Q-Sort which was conceptualised from an industry perspective. Although it could be argued that industry is part of the relational conceptualisation within this factor, this participant was adamant that Employability for them was industry driven. This participant (27st-NW) also stated that they were still confused by the concept of Employability and for them Employability was getting a job, but when they see some of the statements related to Employability, it appears to be more than simply getting a job. This view is also shared within literature and potentially adds to the complexities, confusion and difficulties when trying to evolve the concept of Employability and get the most from the concept (Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne, 2017; Williams *et al*. 2016). The confusion of Employability however, did not seem present amongst the responses from participants 2sm-NW, 6cd-NW, 7cd-NW, 19c-NW and 22c-NW, who all made comment about the opportunities throughout their educational journey and beyond and how this influenced the way Employability was perceived. The views shared from these participants bring to light the theories of Self-Concept Theory and Protean Career Theory. The use of Self-Concept Theory is evident through the comments related to time and experiences being influential on changes of perception and Protean Career Theory is evident when assessing the following comments from participants 7cd-NW and 22c-NW:

> *"Obviously as I am not in uni anymore I have looked at this slightly differently. I can see that unis may have a place in this but I think there are more important people (if that's how to phrase it) who should be ahead of unis, and that includes me. I don't think I gave myself enough credit or power over my own future, but I also don't think this was encouraged by my uni" (7cd-NW).*

"I am a crucial part of my own Employability but unfortunately, I don't feel like this was considered. As a student I felt like I needed to take instruction and do what I was told" (22c-NW).

Although the comments relate to an individual drive for Employability development it is difficult to see past the comments made in relation to the university. There appears to be a consistent message that students feel Employability should have been driven by them but the tools or processes to do that were not available.

8.4.2.4 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: EMPLOYABILITY OUTSIDE OF UNIVERSITY

Participants were asked about developing Employability outside university to understand how much work was being undertaken in relation to Employability development that fell outside of the remit of university workloads. The response to this question delivered 3 outputs; those who took opportunities via the university, those who sought opportunities without the input of the university and those who didn't seek any external opportunities at all. 50% of the participants reported that they did take opportunities that were presented by the university to develop their Employability skills externally. Participant 31ss-NW stated they were presented with an opportunity that replicated the setting in which they wanted to pursue a career, whilst participant 22c-NW stated they took all the opportunities presented. In contrast to the approach by participant 22c-NW, participants 7cd-NW and 19c-NW had different experiences. 7cd-NW admitting to only taking 1 of many opportunities but this was due to their awareness of being overloaded whilst participant 19c-NW said they were fortunate as they left opportunities until the last minute but managed to secure some experience via their peers. Although the university played a part in providing opportunities for these participant, other participants decided to look for their own opportunities. Participants 2sm-NW and 15c-NW both stated that they sought external opportunities without the assistance of the university and this allowed them to look for opportunities that were more tailored to their Employability development needs. Participant 15c-NW referred to missing classes because of building on experiences outside of university. Smith (2012) reported that there is minimal conversation within literature surrounding the importance of measuring extracurricular engagement in an academic capacity. Within earlier research by

Robins and Gowar (2003) they reported that not all student learning takes place in the classroom and therefore student engagement metrics should account for this. Literature acknowledges that learning goes beyond the boundaries of university walls, but there is an issue when it comes to managed and measuring these activities. Unfortunately for participants 6cd-NW and 27st-NW, this was not a concern as neither took any opportunities that were presented to them during their time at university.

8.4.2.5 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: GRADUATE JOURNEY

Part of understanding the journey of those within this study is to find out what roles they have ended up in or are in at the point of the data being captured. As with the previous questions asked there are some themes emerging from the responses given, those themes are; return to study, working but not in a sector relevant to their degree, working in a sector relevant to their degree and unemployed. In an ideal world every graduate would be in a job that relates to their programme of study but this often takes time, patience and often networking and building relationships to obtain opportunities. There are 3 examples from the participants within this study that have managed to secure employment in areas/roles that they set out. Participants 15c-NW, 22c-NW and 31ss-NW have all stated that they are working within their preferred settings in relation to career choices. Something to note with these participants is that earlier in the interview, they all stated that they had taken opportunities presented to them whether that was via the university or if this was sourced individually. Once again this is an ideal example of Protean Career Theory as the individual drive to secure opportunities, take opportunities and turn them into potential career options has proved to be worthwhile for those 3 participants. In contrast there are also 3 participants who have shared that they are working but not in any sector or role relating to their programmes of study. When assessing these 3 participants (6cd-NW, 7cd-NW, 19c-NW) there is a similar pattern that aligns to taking or missing out on opportunities during their university experience. Participants 6cd-NW,7cd-NW and 19c-NW seemed to be lacking the levels of proactiveness of some of the other participants and this was evident through some of the comments outlined in section 8.4.2.4. Similar to participant 6cd-NW, participant 27st-NW was also lacking when it came to taking opportunities during their university experience and mentioned within section 8.4.2.4 that they had taken no opportunities to develop themselves

outside of university. When correlating this information alongside the admission that this participant is currently unemployed there seems to be a pattern emerging. Based on the observations noted in this section there appears to be a correlation between those who take as many opportunities as possible and those who end up employed in relevant sectors, those who are employed in non-relevant sectors to their degree and those who are unemployed. There is however a deviant in the group with participant 2sm-NW stating that they have returned to studying after noticing shifts in the job markets and needing to upskill in different areas.

8.4.2.6 SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS: EMPLOYABILITY ENGAGEMENT

In the final part of the interview, participants were asked to assess their engagement levels with Employability and to consider some of the factors that may have impacted on this. Participant 2sm-NW stated that they believed their Employability engagement was good but this was not due to being at university. This participant shared that a lot of their Employability development was done externally which often resulted in missing classes and would be perceived as a student who was disengaged. They feel through their own determination and drive they enhanced their own Employability away from university. Participant 2sm-NW commented on the delivery and mentioned that if industry guest speakers and specialised workshops had been included this could have been useful. The delivery of Employability has been a recurring theme throughout the responses from this question, some of the comments related to delivery and content are as follows:

> *"If the delivery was different perhaps I would have engaged better as it would be delivered in a way I can relate to" (6cd-NW).*

> *"I thought the delivery was inconsistent, and this also depended on the who was teaching us as this altered the messages coming across" (7cd-NW).*

> *"The delivery was an issue for me, I didn't find it interesting so I would either turn up and be passive or I wouldn't turn up at all" (15c-NW).*

285

"The delivery was a turn off for me, it needed to be more coaching focussed or practical based and then my interest probably would have been peaked" (19c-NW).

The comments raised by these participants align to their admissions of classifying themselves as not engaging with the concept of Employability and the points raised explain why they chose to disengage with the process. There are some exceptions amongst these participants, including the comments made by 22c-NW who declared that they could not have been more engaged with Employability related content, and they feel that those efforts have proved invaluable in getting them into their current position. The final comment comes from participant 31ss-NW who assumed that their engagement levels were good due to the fact there were no deliberate Employability modules on their programme but they can also see where their Employability was enhanced during their studies when reflecting on their student journey.

The findings from the interviews have proved insightful and have allowed patterns to emerge between those who engaged with the process of Employability and those who did not, those who took opportunities and those who did not and those whose engagement of Employability outside the walls of the university and realised the value this can bring. There are correlations evident within these findings that indicate the more engaged a student is the more likely they are to end up in careers they want, but the reason why some choose to engage, and some do not, needs further exploration. There is a deafening message within these findings that seem to gravitate towards content delivery, the content itself and how engagement is measured. Using the findings from this study and comparing that to the findings across studies 1 and 2 will look more holistically at the way in which Employability is viewed and the impact and influence this has on engagement with the concept.

8.5 COMPARISONS: STUDY 1,2 AND 3

The purpose of this research is to understand the perceptions and engagement with Employability from the view of undergraduate sports students. To address this, objectives were set to assist in the ability of providing some rationale and understanding around this area of research. Those objectives have been met in the preceding chapters of this thesis and as outlined in section 1.7. The following section will be utilised to compare all 3 studies contained within this thesis to understand the connections between each study and how time, experience and influence has changed/maintained perceptions of Employability and how this is directly associated with Engagement.

An overview of the conceptualisation of Employability from each study has been included within table 44. Table 44 will be utilised within this section to share the shared viewpoints of Employability and the changes that have occurred with this from student to graduate. Utilising table 44 there is an obvious observation of the emergence of a new relational conceptualisation within study 3. As mentioned in section 8.4.1, sample size needs to be considered when analysing the findings from study 3, but even so this relational conceptualisation is not only new, it is a shared view by 7 of the 8 participants within study 3, therefore the findings have merit.

Table 44 – Studies 1, 2 and 3: Conceptualisation of Findings

	Study 1			Study 2			Study 3		
	Conceptualisations								
	Industry	HEIs	Individual	Industry	HEIs	Individual	Industry	HEIs	Individual
Factor A			x	x			x		x
Factor B		x			x	x		N/A	
Factor C	x					x		N/A	

The emergence of the new relational conceptualisation ironically does not include Higher Education and considering the setting in which these graduates took part in this research and have been chosen based on their education setting, is somewhat surprising. However, as a relational concept this aligns to some of the views found in literature who also believe that a relational conceptualisation of Employability exists between industry and individuals (Bridgstock, 2009; Brown, Hesketh and Williams, 2003; Daniel, Andrea and Gaughen,1998; DHFETE, 2002; Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser, 2013; HM Treasury, 1997). Although the emergence of a new relational concept has emerged within the final study of this thesis when comparing to the previous studies, this proves that the emergence of this relational concept is not new in the world of literature but in fact is agreed amongst many researchers. The question therefore is why do the participants within study 3 (graduates) have a different perception of Employability compared to their perceptions as study 2 participants (students)? As demonstrated within table 43, each participant within this final study did consider industry or individuals within their concept of Employability in the findings from study 2 so moving towards the creation of a relational conceptualisation of Employability of industry and individual would not be considered far removed from the findings in study 2, but there is still a clear shift towards this from studies 2 to 3. To understand why perceptions have altered and how this impact on engagement, consideration will be given to both Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and Self-Concept Theory (Super, 1981) to try and underpin some reasoning for these changes and impacts.

8.5.1: COMPARING STUDIES 1,2, AND 3: PERCEPTION CHANGES: SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is founded on the beliefs that learning occurs in social contexts and with reciprocal interaction of the person, behaviour, and environments (LaMorte, 2019). SCT is described as a behavioural change model based on the interactions and influences of others and how this can result in behavioural change (LaMorte, 2019). Behavioural change occurs with alteration in thoughts and behaviour is a manifestation of those thought processes. In relation to how this applies to perception changes amongst the participants from studies 2 to 3, changes to thought processes can occur from social contexts to influence

the way in which the world around us is viewed. Including staff within this thesis allows for exploration around the potential influence of staff on students and whether this impacts not only perception but engagement. To assess the potential influence of staff on the students within study 3 table 45 is an adapted version of table 41 to show the potential interactions between those included within study 1 and those included in study 3 who shared similar viewpoints.

Table 45 – Studies 1 and 3: Assessing influence via Conceptualised Factor Loading

	Individual	Industry
Study 1	staff1, staff4, staff10,	staff5, staff6
	Factor A	Factor C
Study 3	2sm-NW, 6cd-NW, 7cd-NW, 15c-NW, 19c-NW, 22c-NW, 31ss-NW	2sm-NW, 6cd-NW, 7cd-NW, 15c-NW, 19c-NW, 22c-NW, 31ss-NW
	Factor A	Factor A

There are some indicators within table 45 that highlight the likelihood of staff influence across some, if not all the participants that have been loaded against Factor A within the final study. As an example, and based on these findings it would be acceptable to assume that staff1 and staff6 have played an influential role on the beliefs and perceptions of 2sm-nw. Each participant within study 3 shares the same views of staff they have interacted with as part of their undergraduate journey. The only exception to this is participant 31ss-NW who may have been influenced by participant staff10, but the views of participant staff10 only consider an individual conceptualisation to Employability and therefore indicating that 31ss-NW has generated their beliefs of Employability being a relational conceptualisation between industry and individual from elsewhere.

8.5.2: COMPARING STUDIES 1,2 AND 3: PERCEPTION CHANGES: SELF-CONCEPT THEORY

As mentioned in the previous section, participant 31ss-NW has developed their perspective on Employability from a relational conceptualisation, the individual aspect may well have been influenced by staff10, but what about the industry aspect, perhaps this is a perfect example of Self-Concept Theory developed by Donald Super (1981). Super created the Self-Concept theory to explain changes that occur through the natural phenomenon of time but also experiences undertaken. Although it is highly likely that participant 31ss-NW was influenced by participant staff10 regarding an individual approach to Employability, it is also likely that their development of perception change to a relational conceptualisation was built on the experiences undertaken by participant 31ss-NW especially considering their original Q-Sort also did not include industry in relation to defining Employability. The implementation of Self-Concept theory with participant 31ss-NW seems relevant when comparing the statements from this respondent across sections 8.4.2.4 and 8.4.2.5 were they disclosed that opportunities during their student journey were taken, and this resulted in them being in employment within an applicable area upon becoming a graduate. Self-Concept Theory is also in action with other participants when comparing how experiences as a student were utilised beyond the academic journey and understanding the benefits of those experiences once becoming a graduate.

8.5.3: COMPARING STUDIES 1,2, AND 3: ENGAGEMENT: SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Section 8.5.1 assessed how the results of this thesis showed influence from those within study 1 (staff) on those within study 3 (graduates) by using the benchmark data collected in study 2 to see how perceptions of those students, now graduates had changed. Within this section, the engagement levels of the participants within study 3 will be assessed to determine whether like their changes of perception, influence has played a part on their engagement levels with Employability. The difference in this section is not to assess the influence of staff on engagement levels, but to assess how their perceptions of Employability impacted on their engagement. To aid discussion table 46 has been included to show engagement levels across

those within study 3 and for context their current status and final degree classifications have been included.

Table 46 – Study 3 Participants: Engagement Levels

	Engagement Level		Current Status				Degree Outcome
	In University	Out of University	Employed in a degree related role	Employed not in a degree related role	Unemployed	Other	
2sm-NW	Low	High				✓	1st
6cd-NW	Low	Low		✓			3rd
7cd-NW	High	Medium		✓			2:1
15c-NW	Low	High	✓				2:2
19c-NW	Low	Medium		✓			2:2
22c-NW	High	High	✓				1st
27st-NW	Low	Low			✓		3rd
31ss-NW	Medium	High	✓				2:1

Using the information in the table it is apparent that there are varying levels of engagement with Employability across these participants. However, the importance of this section is to understand what has influenced these engagement levels and the impact of this. The first point to mention is the link between those who engaged with Employability classified as medium-high, have come out with no less than a 2:1 classification from their degree programme. This indicates that some form of engagement with the concept regardless of whether this was within the university or outside has brought some reward via their classification. So, the question is what affected the engagement of these participants? When reviewing the responses from the interviews there are resounding comments related to content delivery and the content itself. The statements from the participants who didn't engage reported this was due to boring content, not applicable to their programme of study and noticing the lack of engagement from peers. When assessing this information coupled with the foundations of Social Cognitive Theory there are links between the 2. Social Cognitive Theory considers social interactions and how this can be influential on decisions

that are made so when adding the participants into the mix, seeing lack of peer engagement and lack of familiarity with the content lends itself to how a Theory such as Social Cognitive Theory within studies such as this.

8.5.4: COMPARING STUDIES 1,2, AND 3: ENGAGEMENT: SELF-CONCEPT THEORY

When linking Self-Concept Theory and the findings that are evident in table 46, there is a perfect example of you get out what you put in. Self-Concept Theory recognises the importance of time and experience and the impact of building experiences over time can create greater opportunities going forward (Super, Savickas and Super, 1996). The data within table 46 highlights that for those who dedicated time and experience into their own Employability development and engaged with the process are those who reaped the rewards via their degree classifications and their current status of employment. There are example participants within study 3 who could benefit from the advantages of using theoretical underpinning such as the Self-Concept Theory and for the purposes of highlighting this, participant 27st-NW will used. Participants 27st-NW was fairly consistent in the way they answered questions during the semi-structured interview. It was apparent that elements of regret and disappointment in themselves was something they thought about. This participant did disclose that due to personal reasons they did feel a better option would have been to suspend or withdraw from their studies within their 1st undergraduate year, but this does not explain the lack of opportunities or the lack of engagement throughout the remainder of their undergraduate journey. Participant 27st-NW is a good example of a student who did not engage with the concept of Employability, did not attempt to take opportunities to build experience and generally did not get the most out of their university experience. In contrast, participant 22c-NW is a glowing example of how the foundations of the Self-Concept Theory have creeped into development of this person and what has been achieved as a result. As seen in table 46, this participant classified themselves as highly engaged both in and out of university and this resulted in obtaining the highest classification possible and securing a role that was directly relevant to their programme of study.

8.6 RESEARCH OUTPUT

To incorporate the perspectives from existing literature and extend the implications of this research, it is essential to investigate and elucidate how these findings can be applied beyond the scope of this thesis (Smith, 2018; Johnson, 2019). The data collected during this thesis and the subsequent findings have facilitated the development of a model that delineates the concept of Employability as a dynamic process (figure 38). Figure 38 has been constructed to substantiate the diverse interpretations of Employability found in literature and confirmed by the findings of this research (Brown, 2017; Williams, 2020). The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis provides evidence that Employability encompasses various meanings for different individuals, and given the timeframe of the research, this plurality seems to be a persistent characteristic (Miller, 2016). This perspective is also evident among the participants at each stage of this study, underscoring the necessity of embracing the notion that Employability is a multifaceted and context-dependent concept that varies across individuals (Anderson, Barrett and Lowe, 2018). The model depicted in figure 38 promotes the idea of perceiving Employability as a process rather than a rigid, universally applicable construct (Harris and Wilson, 2019). The findings from this thesis have emphasized the consideration of Employability as an individual-centric concept, an industry-driven concept, a higher education-driven concept, as well as a relational concept involving multiple stakeholders (Clark, 2020; Thompson, 2019). Understanding Employability is a complex undertaking, and the multiple definitions uncovered in this thesis further contribute to this complexity (Roberts, 2021). However, this does not imply that efforts cannot be made to mitigate the ambiguity and leverage these findings to enhance comprehension and engagement with the concept of Employability (Turner et al., 2017). The primary objective of constructing a process-based model based on the findings of this thesis is to encompass the diverse definitions and allow for flexibility in understanding, developing, and implementing Employability practices (Adams, 2022). By adopting such an approach, it becomes possible to navigate the intricacies associated with Employability and accommodate its nuanced nature (Baker and Davis, 2018). This model serves as a valuable tool for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in comprehending and operationalizing Employability in various contexts, ultimately making a meaningful impact (Smith et al., 2023).

Figure 38 – Thesis Findings: The Process of Employability
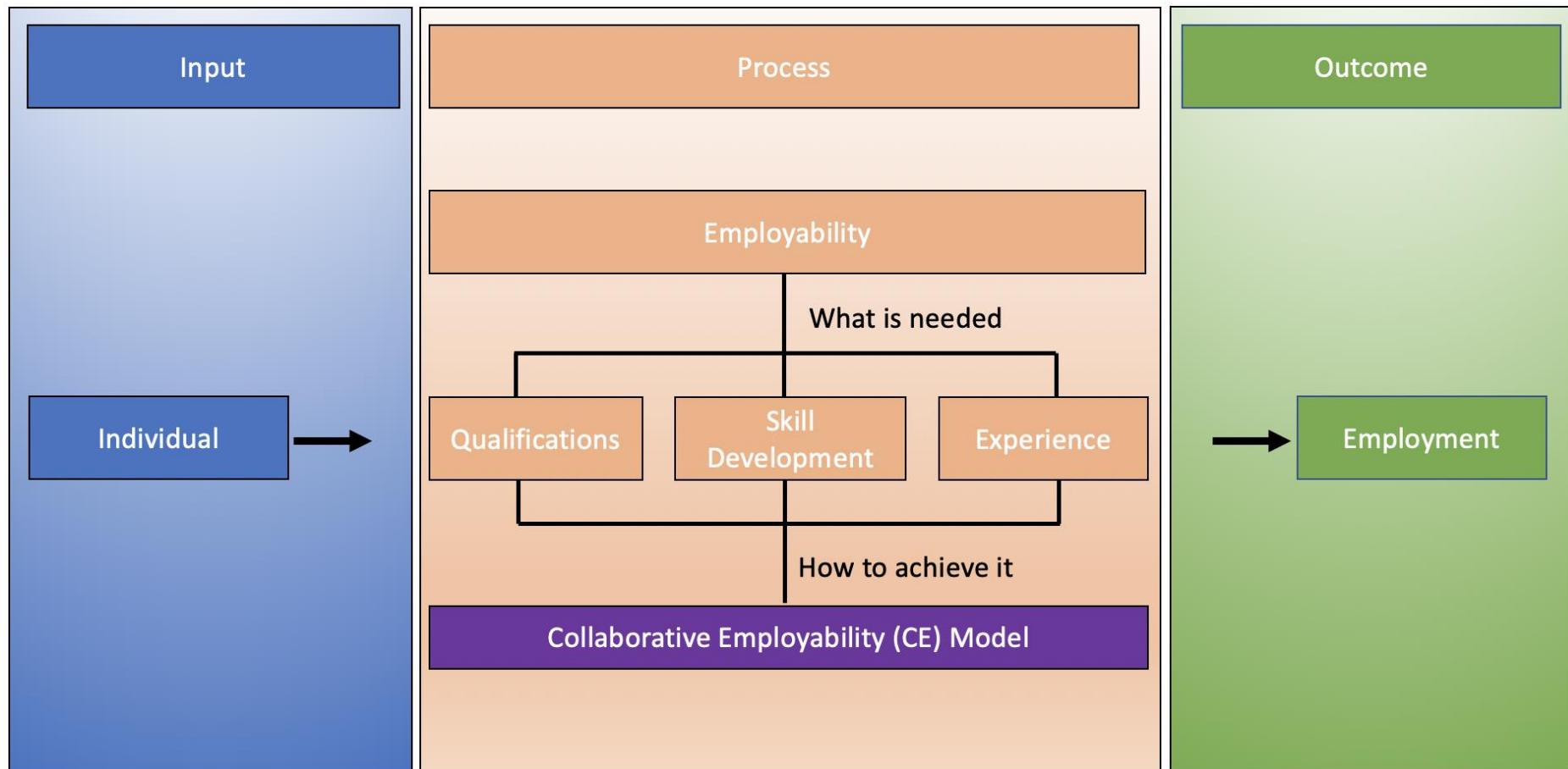
The concept of Employability within this process model is portrayed as intangible as it is not something you can see, not something you can touch and not something you can feel, however if there is engagement, there are many benefits for the recipient and this is evidenced in the quote from participant 22c-NW from study 3, who states:

"I took as many opportunities as possible and at one point I had about 3 different voluntary roles at the same time, which all added some sort of value and gave me different experiences that I can still see the impact of those today". (22c-NW).

The primary focus of this thesis was to examine students' perspectives and engagement with Employability and this is has been translated into the creation of the model demonstrated as figure 44. For many students, attending university serves the purpose of acquiring education, qualifications, and securing employment in their chosen field (Brown, 2019). These insights were utilised to establish the input and output components of the model, demonstrating that students embark on the Employability process as soon as they decide to enhance their employability prospects (outcome) (Roberts, 2020). Consequently, the journey of Employability commences from the very beginning of their educational pursuit, with each step serving as a pathway towards their desired outcome (Anderson, Barrett and Lowe, 2016). The observation that Employability holds diverse meanings highlights that each individual's pathway to the desired outcome may vary significantly, yet ultimately leads to the desired destination (Miller, 2018). This further supports the notion of Employability as a dynamic process that can manifest in various forms but consistently aims to assist individuals in achieving their goals (Thompson, 2021). However, it is important to acknowledge that the steps involved in this process can present their own challenges (Clark, 2019). Some of these challenges have been illuminated through the feedback received in study 3, which emphasizes the detrimental effects of disengagement, insufficient consideration of student input, and a general lack of interest in pursuing available opportunities (Adams, 2021). This is evidenced in the following comments:

"I was completely disengaged throughout the entire course and as I've said my motivation just wasn't there and therefore my lack of engagement was obvious and this was reflected in my grades unfortunately" (27st-NW).

"I am a crucial part of my own employability but unfortunately, I don't feel like this was considered. As a student I felt like I needed to take instruction and do what I was told" (22c-NW).

"I didn't take opportunities to try and develop my employability and this was something I hugely regret. I started to try and get some experience when it was probably too late". (6cd-NW).

The perspectives shared by the participants demonstrate the necessity of incorporating mechanisms within the Employability process to prioritize engagement, amplify student voices, and provide meaningful opportunities (Jones et al., 2019). To facilitate this and highlight the significance of qualifications, skill development, and experiences, the introduction of a Collaborative Employability (CE) Model has been suggested (figure 39) (Smith and Johnson, 2020). The introduction of a Collaborative Employability Model is to ensure that all key stakeholders are provided with equal input into the process of Employability and that there is balance across the stakeholders. Not only does the CE Model align to the key stakeholders outlined within the QAA model of 2014, but it also aligns to the relational concepts of Employability as evidenced within Chapter 3 and within Appendix A. Due to the focus of this thesis being student driven, it has provided an opportunity to hear from one of those key stakeholders about the true impact they perceive themselves to have on the concept of Employability. The comments from those stakeholders pertaining to student voice was one of a shared perspective and in complete agreement that student voice is not allocated in the same way as other stakeholders within the arena of Employability. Comments from the participants within study 3 are as follows:

"I feel the role of my uni was quite limited and although there are different departments and careers services, my employability in my view enhanced when I took control. I kind of feel that uni's have specific information about employability and just

deliver it to students, but I was never involved in any process at uni that allowed me be part of employability whilst being a student" (2sm-NW).

"Involve your students more, at the end of the day this is their employability, their life, let them have some ownership" (2sm-NW)

"My awareness was ok in regard to employability but my faith in the university and my belief that they would steer me in the right direction was there. Not completely convinced that, that is what I should have done but I did and perhaps even allowed the uni to take more control than I should of" (7cd-NW).

"I don't think I gave myself enough credit or power over my own future, but I also don't think this was encouraged by my uni. As someone who believed the uni would steer me in the right direction, if they weren't encouraging me to be part of my own employability than I would have believed this is correct. Being in control of my own future is something I wish I had been encouraged to do" (7cd-NW).

"I am a crucial part of my own employability but unfortunately, I don't feel like this was considered. As a student I felt like I needed to take instruction and do what I was told" (22c-NW).

"My main comment is to allow students more ownership and also accountability for their own employability" (22c-NW).

Figure 39 – Thesis Findings: Collaborative Employability (CE) Model
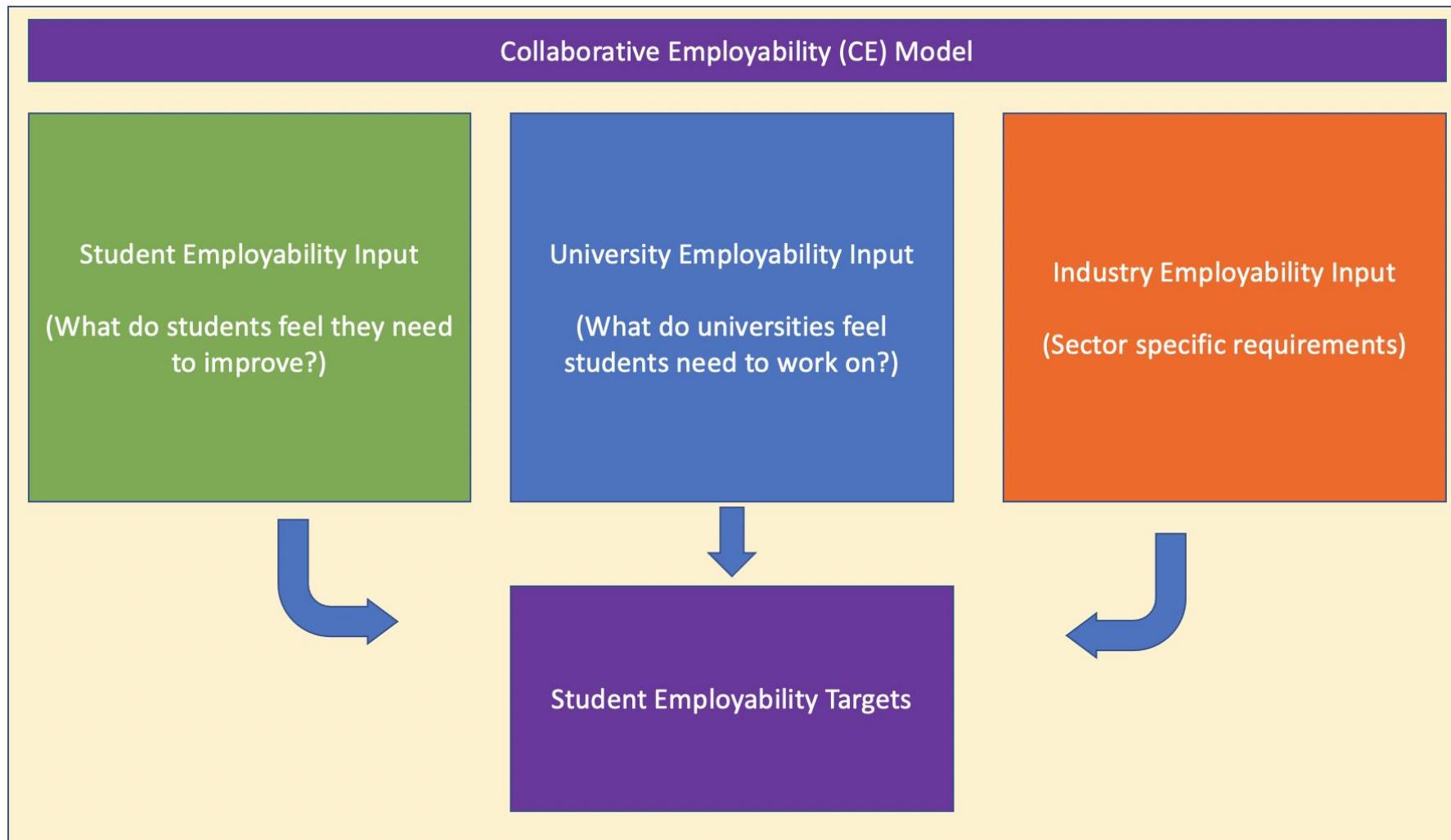
The research findings concerning students' limited opportunities and their limited sense of accountability and ownership in relation to Employability have further underscored the importance of addressing this issue through the implementation of a model such as the Collaborative Employability (CE) Model. It is crucial to note that increasing the volume of student voices does not imply diminishing the voices of Higher Education institutions and Industry; rather, it aims to promote equitable representation within the domain of Employability (Smith et al., 2019). There are significant benefits for all stakeholders involved in implementing a CE Model. For students, being actively involved in shaping Employability practices allows them to have a voice in an area that has traditionally lacked student representation. Research suggests that student involvement can directly impact their engagement (Anderson, Barrett and Lowe, 2017). Higher Education institutions benefit by producing graduates who are better prepared for the workforce, thanks to the contributions of students themselves and industry partners (Johnson and Thompson, 2020). Moreover, industry stakeholders have the opportunity to actively shape the future workforce and gain assurance about the skill sets possessed by graduating students (Adams and Baker, 2022). With the combined efforts of all stakeholders, there is a much better chance that student employability targets will be more specific, more achievable, and more importantly, increases the chances of active student engagement.

8.6.1 IMPLEMENTING THE FINDINGS

The following section will outline how data can be effectively captured from the 3 key stakeholders outlined in the CE Model (figure 39) to create Employability targets for all students.

8.6.1.1 STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY INPUT

The prevalence of a 'one size fits all' approach to employability in universities can be attributed to the convenience of avoiding the complexities associated with the diverse meanings of Employability among individuals (Smith et al., 2018; Johnson, 2020). Unfortunately, this approach hinders the effective capture of personalized data from each student, contributing to the challenges of implementing individualized employability plans (Roberts, 2019).

However, there are straightforward mechanisms that can be implemented to initiate this process and begin the adoption of personalised employability strategies for students (Clark and Brown, 2021). Evidence suggests that institutions employ varying approaches to capture student data, leading to discrepancies between institutions (Adams and Baker, 2020). Regrettably, this means that students from less proactive institutions may feel disadvantaged compared to their counterparts from other institutions (Adams and Baker, 2020). To establish a simple approach to student input, it is advisable to start by gathering information about students' existing skill sets and future career aspirations upon enrolment. Understanding the skills students bring to their university journey can serve as a foundation for their development (Johnson and Thompson, 2019). By involving students in this process, it not only avoids being perceived as tedious but also promotes their engagement in their educational journey (Anderson, Barrett and Lowe, 2020). Aligning career aspirations with current skill sets enables institutions to identify individual development opportunities and ensures that students consistently progress in their desired career directions (Brown, 2018). Throughout this research, it became evident that significant emphasis is placed on graduate employability, highlighting the substantial gap between students and graduates in terms of employability development (Smith and Clark, 2021). The purpose of involving students in this process is to empower them with greater control, accountability, and developmental opportunities throughout their educational journey, ultimately recognizing their personal growth in Employability (Thompson, Higgins and Healey., 2022).

8.6.1.2 UNIVERSITY EMPLOYABILITY INPUT

While government regulations influence university operations, universities still possess flexibility in creating and implementing their own policies and strategies (Smith and Johnson, 2020; Brown and Clark, 2022). Each university develops an employability strategy, which is increasingly significant due to the growing pressure to provide value for money and compete for student recruitment (Anderson, Barrett and Lowe, 2019; Roberts and Thompson, 2021). The heightened emphasis on Employability has resulted in the creation of dedicated staff roles focused on career and employability, offering substantial benefits to individual students and their progress during their university experience (Clark and Brown, 2019). Regarding the impact of universities within the Collaborative Employability (CE) Model, there is a significant

opportunity to incorporate university practices and policies to meet both student employability needs and university targets (Smith et al., 2021). One approach is for universities to act as intermediaries between students and industry, ensuring that the employability development outlined by students aligns with the requirements of their desired career sectors (Adams and Baker, 2020).

8.6.1.3 INDUSTRY EMPLOYABILITY INPUT

Encouraging industry participation as co-creators in curriculum design to cultivate sector-specific skills is a recommended practice (Hartley. Hardy and Broadhead, 2020; Johnson and Thompson, 2021). Within the Collaborative Employability (CE) Model, industry's role primarily involves providing intelligence that can be utilised to benchmark the development of student skills (Smith et al., 2022). This data can be employed to assess students' current skill levels or establish targets for success in specific sectors (Brown and Clark, 2020). Similar to the collection of student data, industry input is not a static process and requires frequent revisiting to account for evolving sector demands and align with the trajectory of skill development in personalised employability plans for students (Roberts and Baker, 2019). Career and employability specialists within universities play crucial roles in this development, drawing on subject-specific expertise and employing academic research approaches to comprehend the post-university markets that students enter (Clark and Johnson, 2020). Continually revising the understanding of skills required in various sectors enables universities to build databases of market shifts, informing curriculum development and enhancing employability development practices (Thompson, Higgins and Healey, 2023).

8.7 LIMITATIONS TO THE RESEARCH

For a project that lasted 9 years the limitations of this research were relatively few. The limitations for this research revolved around data collection and sample size. In terms of data collection, it would have been better if there was a larger representation for the University based in the Midlands across both studies 1 and 2. Due to the logistics of travel and availability of both staff and students, the number of participants from the university in the

Midlands was the maximum number available that would align with the timeframe of this research. When data collecting at the University in the Northwest for study 2, being able to conduct the Q-Sort constructions on their own could have been beneficial rather than in a classroom space and reduced any potential issue of influence or bias amongst the participants. Finally, the sample size for study 3 could have been larger and offered more views on this subjective topic. The reason why the sample size was small was due to lack of response from those who were eligible and being able to only get full commitment from the 8 participants featured in study 3.

8.8 RESEARCH CONCLUSION

This research has highlighted findings that can create an impact on the way in which Employability practice is created and delivered to those who will benefit the most, the students.

Employability is still a contested and complex topic, and the point of this thesis was not to find a universal definition, but to in fact understand how Employability is perceived amongst the student population within Higher Education. The findings from each study have demonstrated that influence plays a significant part on how Employability is perceived. This statement is not ground-breaking, but it does show the importance of awareness when it comes to teaching and learning. The words and views of one person can easily penetrate another and this message can then create a domino effect. In the instance of this thesis that domino effect is the impact on engagement. It would be unfair to say that engagement levels are determined by the way in which higher education staff perceive and therefore deliver topics, but this must be a consideration. In relation to this thesis, perceptions and beliefs have impacted on some of the participants when it comes to engagement. Some of those perceptions align to the upcoming observations that have emerged from this thesis.

One of those observations is the use of terminology. The findings from studies 2 and 3 highlighted that for some, the terms employment and Employability are interchangeable and are therefore deemed to hold the same meaning. Although this may have been expected more from study 2, to still see the presence of those terms being used interchangeably within study 3 was somewhat surprising, considering they had completed a full undergraduate degree programme and still used both terms as one in the same.

The second observation was the lack of ownership and accountability that is given to students. Within the responses of the interviews in study 3, some participants mentioned that they wanted more ownership of their learning, and the student voice was barely heard, but this was down to never being asked.

As mentioned at the start of this thesis and again at the start of this section, the purpose of this research was not to find a definition for Employability that would work for all, but from the work within this thesis and the findings that have emerged, I feel that a sufficient definition for Employability could read as follows:

"Employability is a process. A collaborative process of many components working together towards the outcome of employment" (Prescott, 2022).

The creation of Employability as a process (figure 38) shows how Employability can be viewed more holistically as a process and when used alongside the Collaborative Employability (CE) Model (figure 39), the idea is that Employability will be perceived differently depending on the stakeholder, so the most important part, is to ensure there is a vehicle for all stakeholders to heard in equal proportion.

Utilising the process of employability (figure 38) as a tool to educate the meaning of employability alongside the CE Model (figure 39), can be the starting point for not only assessing and delivering employability practice, but can also be used to ensure each stakeholder involved is given equal input

8.9 THE STUDENT VOICE: MY FINAL THOUGHTS AS A RESEARCH STUDENT

My hunger for Employability has always been present, sometimes obvious but sometimes not. I have taught across multiple institutions and Employability has subtly always crept into everything that I do. Although my teaching area is Performance Analysis in Sport, I often feel like this has been a façade or rather a vehicle in which I can promote Employability and try to get the best for my students. I am fortunate enough that my teaching area is classified as vocational and therefore making Employability a little bit easier to digest for some. What I discovered was that I am part of a sector that uses the term 'Employability' quite a lot and

this is also used on marketing materials, during open day presentations and is sold as part of the package to get students to invest in their future. When the term Employability was used in this way it was always coupled with graduate outcome, which of course is an aspect, but what about the student? You must be a student to become a graduate so why is the focus on graduate Employability and not student Employability? I then disappeared down a rabbit hole of, do students even know what Employability is? Do staff know? Do institutions know? This was the birth of my PhD research topic. A prominent message throughout this thesis is the volume level of students regarding literature when it comes to Employability and the fact it was on mute! My mind then started to think like a salesperson, if Employability is 'sold' as part of an education package, then surely we need to understand if the target market knows what the product is. These questions led me to explore the perceptions of Employability from the view of undergraduate Sports Students, otherwise known as study 2. I was keen to ensure I explored Employability from a student perspective, and this led me towards the idea of a longitudinal study that would not only capture the transition of student to graduate but would also capture a reflective account of their student journey and this was the idea behind study 3. As part of student life, engagement is a huge aspect, as students are constantly monitored for attainment, retention, attendance, and engagement. Understanding that this is part of an educational journey allowed me to couple both Employability and engagement together to see if there are correlations or interactions between the 2. As someone who has worked in academia for 15 years, I know that staff interactions can influence students in relation to perceptions and engagement so it seemed a sensible idea to include staff in this research, as understanding their perception could allow for the assessment of patterns between the two in relation to Employability and engagement, this was study 1. It is understandable for perceptions to change based on time, experience and influence but the purpose of trying to understand what impact these changes have can be really useful. There is evidence in this thesis that perceptions have changed and there is evidence in this thesis that some of that change could be down to staff influence. The reason why this is important is to acknowledge that the way in which content is produced, delivered and sold to the student can have an impact which may be positive or negative and may not be seen immediately, but the message is, it can have an impact. But the main message from this thesis is that students must be given a voice, let them become independent learners, let them become accountable and let them shape their own futures. There is of course a place for the input of educators but help them

to steer in the direction they want to go rather than moving them into the passenger seat and taking control. Provide the platform for their voice to be heard and lets move away from the all too familiar saying "You're on mute"!

REFERENCES

Adams, L. (2021), Enhancing graduate employability: Perspectives, experiences, and prospects. Routledge.

Adams, L. (2022), Employability and the changing world of work. Oxford University Press.

Adams, L and Baker, S. (2020), Institutional and student perspectives on employability: Implications for partnership and practice. Higher Education Research & Development, 39(7), 1344-1358.

Adams, L and Baker, S. (2022), Collaboration for employability: Industry perspectives on partnerships with higher education. Journal of Education and Work, 35(1), 1-17.

Adom, D., Yeboah, A. and Ankrah, A. (2016), 'Constructivism Philosophical Paradigm: Implication for Research, Teaching and Learning', *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences* 4(10), pp. 1-9.

Aicher, T.J. and Newland, B. (2020), *Sport's future leaders – workforce development in small sport organisations.* Publisher Unknown.

Akhtar-Danesh, N., Baumann, A. and Cordingley, L. (2008), 'Q-methodology in nursing research: A promising method for the study of subjectivity', Western Journal of Nursing Research, 30, pp. 759-773.

Aldcroft, A. (2011), 'The motivations to study and expectations of studying of undergraduate students in business and management', *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 35(4), pp. 521-43. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2011.590581.

Alexandre, F., Portela, M. and Sa, C. (2009), 'Admission conditions and graduate' employability', *Studies for Higher Education,* 34 (7), pp. 795-805.

Allen, M., Greenless, A. and Jones, M. (2013), 'Personality in Sport: A comprehensive review', *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology,* 6 (1), pp. 184-208.

Altbach, P.J. (2018), 'Globla Perspectives on Higher Education', *Higher School of Economics,* (92), pp. 99-100.

Anderson, J., Barrett, H and Lowe, D. (2016). Employability as a graduate attribute: Perceptions of students, employers, and staff. Studies in Higher Education, 41(7), 1152-1170.

Anderson, J., Barrett, H and Lowe, D. (2017). Student engagement with employability: The role of work-based learning in enhancing student perceptions of the relevance of employability skills. Studies in Higher Education, 42(8), 1362-1377.

Anderson, J., Barrett, H and Lowe, D. (2018). Exploring the multifaceted nature of employability: Implications for career development. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 105, 162-173.

Anderson, J., Barrett, H and Lowe, D. (2019). Enhancing student employability through university-industry collaboration: An empirical investigation. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 41(3), 269-284.

Anderson, J., Barrett, H and Lowe, D. (2020). Employability and the role of the student voice. In C. Bryan & K. Clegg (Eds.), Innovative Assessment in Higher Education: A Handbook for Academic Practitioners (pp. 99-116). Routledge.

Archer,W. and Davison, J. (2008), *'Graduate Employability: What do Employers Think and Want?',* The Council for Industry and Higher Education.

Arco-Tirado, J., Fernandoz-Martin, F. and Hervas-Torres, M. (2020), 'Evidence-based peer-tutoring program to improve student' performance at the university', *Studies in Higher Education,* 45 (11), pp. 2190-2202.

Artess, J., Hooley, T. and Mellors-Bourne, R. (2017). Employability: A review of the literature 2012 to 2016. A report for the Higher Education Academy. York: Higher Education Academy.

Ashraf, R., Hou, F., Kirmani, S., Ilyas, M., Zaida, S and Ashraf, M. (2018), 'Student Employability via University – Industry Linkages', *Human Systems Management,* 37 (2), pp. 219-232.

Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service (AGCAS), (2011). *Careers Education Benchmark Setting.* Available at: http://www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/33-Careers-Education-Benchmark- Statement (Accessed: 15/4/17).

Axelson, R. and Flick, A. (2010), 'Defining Student Engagement', *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 43(1), pp. 38–43.

Baartman, L. and De Bruijn, E. (2011), 'Integrating knowledge, skills and attitudes: Conceptualising learning processes towards vocational competence', *Educational Research Review,* 6, pp. 125-134.

Babbie, E. R. (2016). The Practice of Social Research. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Baker, S and Davis, T. (2018). Employability and skill development in the knowledge economy: A focus on the cultural sector. Work, Employment and Society, 32(2), 244-262.

Bandura, A. (1986), *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.* Englewood Cliffs. NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1991), 'Social cognitive theory of self-regulation', *Organizational behavior and Human Decision Processes,* 50(2). pp. 248-287.

Bannon, A., McColgan, K., MacNeil, M. and French, B. (2016), *Destination of Leavers from UK Higher Education Institutions: Northern Ireland Analysis – 2014/15.* Department for the Economy. Statistics and Research Agency.

Barnacle, R. and Dall'Alba, G. (2017), 'Committed to learn: student engagement and care in higher education', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(7). pp. 1326-1338, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2017.1326879.

Barnett, R. (2016), *Understanding the University: Institution, idea, possibilities*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Bazeley, P. (2007). Qualitative data analysis with NVivo. SAGE Publications.

Beckem, J.M. (2012), 'Bringing life to learning: Immersive experiential learning simulations for online and blended courses', *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 16(5). pp. 61–71.

Becker, G.S. (1964), *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Becket, N. and Kemp, P. (2006), *Enhancing graduate employability in business and management hospitality, leisure, sport, tourism*. Newbury: Threshold.

Bell, M., Cake, M. and Mansfield, C. (2018), 'Beyond competence: Why we should talk about employability in veterinary education', *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, 45(1). pp. 27–37.

Bell, M., Cake, M. and Mansfield, C. (2019), 'Success in career transitions in veterinary practice: Perspectives of employers and their employees', *Veterinary Record*, 185(8). pp. 232.

Bell, R. (2018), The Impact and Support of Constructivist Learning Environments to Develop Entrepreneurial and Enterprising Graduates to Enhance Employability. Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield.

Bennett, D., Richardson, S., Mahat, M., Coates, H., MacKinnon, P. and Schmidt, L (2015), *Navigating uncertainty and complexity: Higher Education and the dilemma of employability.* Higher Education Research and Development Society in Australasia. Australia.

Bernard, H. R. (2011). Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. Rowman & Littlefield.

Berntson, E. (2008), 'Employability perceptions: nature, determinants, and implications for health and well-being', PhD thesis, Stockholm University, Stockholm.

Berntson, E., Sverke, M. and Marklund, S. (2006), 'Predicting perceived employability: human capital or labour market opportunities?', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 27(2). pp. 223-244, available at: http://eid.sagepub.com/content/27/2/223.

Betsey, C., Hollister, R. and Papageorgiou, M. (1985), *Youth employment and training programs*. Washington: National Academy Press.

Bhattacherjee, A. (2012), Social Science Research: Principles, Methods and Practice. South Florida. Global Text Project.

Birch, R. (2017), What did Dearing ever do for us? Twenty Years of the Learning society. Available at: https://wonkhe.com/blogs/what-did-dearing-ever-do-for-us-twenty-years-on (Accessed on: 13/12/20).

Blom, A. and Saeki, H. (2011), 'Employability and skill set of newly graduated engineers in India', *Policy Research Working Paper No. WPS 5640.* World Bank, Washington, DC.

Boffo, V. (2019), New direction for adult and continuing education. 163. Published online in Wiley Online Library.

Boffo, V. and Fedeli, M. (2018), Employability and competences: Innovative curricula for new professions. Florence, Italy: Firenze University Press.

Bolger, N., Davis, A. and Rafaeli, E. (2003), 'Diary Methods: Capturing Life as it is lived', *Annual Review of Psychology,* 54. pp. 579-616.

Bonwell, C. and Eison, (1991), 'Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom'. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1*. Washington, DC: George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.

Bowden, J., Hart, G., King, B., Trigwell, K. and Watts, O. (2000), Generic capabilities of ATN university graduates.

Boyles, T. (2012), '21st Century knowledge, skills and abilities and entrepreneurial competencies: a model for undergraduate entrepreneurship education', *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education,* 15. pp. 41-55.

Bridgstock, R, and Jackson, D. (2019), 'Strategic institutional approaches to graduate employability: navigating meanings, measurements and what really matters', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 41(5). pp. 468-484.
Bridgstock, R. (2009), 'The graduate attributes we've overlooked: enhancing graduate employability through career management skills', *Higher Education Research & Development,* 28(1). pp. 31-44. DOI: 10.1080/07294360802444347.

Brookfield, S. D. (2000), Education and Self-Directed Learning In C & D. Matheson (Eds), Educational Issues in the Learning Age. New York/London: Continuum.

Brooman, S. and Stirk, S. (2020), 'Who Am I?: Using Reflective Practice and Self-determination to Redefine 'Employability' in Legal Education'. Publisher Unknown.

Brown, R. (2017). The complexities of graduate employability. Higher Education Research & Development, 36(5), 946-961.

Brown, R. (2018). Employability and the future of work: Changing local and global contexts and challenges. Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 70(4), 517-534.

Brown, R. (2019). Employability and the role of higher education. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 40(1), 32-47.

Brown, R and Clark, B. (2020). Employability and the changing university. Higher Education Quarterly, 74(2), 113-131.

Brown, R and Clark, B. (2022). Student perceptions of employability: Context, partnerships, and innovation. Higher Education Research & Development, 41(2), 299-314.

Brown, K. M., Hoye, R. and Nicholson, M. (2012), 'Self-esteem, self-efficacy, and social connectedness as mediators of the relationship between volunteering and well-being', *Journal of Social Service Research*, 38(4). pp. 468–483.

Brown, P. and Hesketh, A. (2004), *The Mismanagement of Talent*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, P., Hesketh, A. and Williams, S. (2003), Employability in a knowledge-driven economy. In Knight, P. (compiler) Notes from the 13th June 2002 'Skills plus' conference, Innovation in education for employability held at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Brown, S. R. (1980), Political Subjectivity. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.

Brown, S. R. (1996), 'Q Methodology and Qualitative Research', *Qualitative health research*, 6(4). pp. 561-567.

Bryman, A. (2008), Social Research Methods. New York, USA: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. (2016). Social Research Methods. Oxford University Press.

Bryson, C. (2014), Clarifying the concept of student engagement, In C. Bryson (Ed) Understanding and developing student engagement. Abingdon: Routledge.

Buckley, A. (2014), 'How radical is student engagement? (And what is it for?)', *Student Engagement and Experience Journal*, 3(2).

Bui, B. and Porter, B. (2010), 'The expectation-performance gap in accounting education: an exploratory study', *Accounting Education: An International Journal*, 19(1–2). pp. 23–50.

Cai, Y. (2013), 'International graduates from Finland: Do they satisfy the needs of Finnish employers abroad?', *Journal of Research in International Education*, 11(1). pp. 19–31.

Cairney, T. (2000), The knowledge-based economy: implications for vocational education and training, Kingswood: University of Western Sydney.

Martin Cake, M., Bell, M., Mossop, L. and Mansfield, C. (2021), 'Employability as sustainable balance of stakeholder expectations – towards a model for the health professions', *Higher Education Research & Development.*

Cake, M., Bell, A., Williams, J., Brown, J., Dozier, J., Rhind, S. and Baillie, S. (2016), 'Which professional (nontechnical) competencies are most important to the success of graduate veterinarians? A best evidence medical education (BEME) systematic review', *Medical Teacher*, 38(6). pp. 550–563.

Canadian Labour Force Development Board (1994), Putting the pieces together: towards a coherent transition system for Canada's labour force. Ottawa: Canadian Labour Force Development Board.

Canning, J. (2017), 'Conceptualising student voice in UK higher education: four theoretical lenses', *Teaching in Higher Education,* 22(5). pp. 519-531.

Capano, G (2011), 'Government continues to do its job: A comparative study of governance shifts in the Higher Education sector', *Public Administration*, 89(4). pp. 1622-1642.

Carter, S. and Henderson, L, (2005), Approaches to Qualitative Data Collection. Open University Press.

Cashman, S.B. and Seifer, S.D. (2008), 'Service-Learning: An Integral Part of Undergraduate Public Health', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 35(3). pp.273-278.

Chin, W., Rasdi, R. (2014), 'Protean Career Development: Exploring the Individuals, Organizational and Job-related Factors', *Asian Social Science*; 10(21).

CIMSPA (2021), About us. Available at: https://www.cimspa.co.uk/about/what-is-cimspa (Accessed on: 11/11/21).

Clark, B. (2019). Employability: Approaches, challenges, and opportunities for higher education institutions. Journal of Education and Work, 32(3), 249-263.

Clark, B. (2020). Employability: A construct for the 21st century. Higher Education, 80(2), 211-226.

Clark, B and Brown, R. (2019). Reimagining graduate employability: A call to action for universities. Journal of Education and Work, 34(2), 135-149.

Clark, B and Brown, R. (2021). Reimagining graduate employability: A call to action for universities. Journal of Education and Work, 34(2), 135-149.

Clark, B and Johnson, M. (2020). Graduate employability and the role of career development learning. Higher Education Research & Development, 39(1), 60-74.

Clarke, M. (2012), 'The organizational career: Not dead but in need of redefinition', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1. pp. 1– 20.

Coates, H. (2007), 'A Model of Online and General Campus-Based Student Engagement', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 32(2). pp.121–141.

Confederation of British Industry (CBI). (1999), Making Employability Work: An Agenda for Action. London: CBI.

Cortellazzo, L., Bonesso, S., Fabrizio, G. and Batista-Foguet, J.M. (2020), 'Protean career orientation: Behavioral antecedents and employability outcomes', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 116(A).

Cotton, K. (2001), Developing Employability Skills, Northwest Regional Educational Research Laboratory, Portland, OR.

Cresswell, J. (2007), Qualitative enquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W and Clark, V. L. P. (2017). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W and Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Cross, R.M. (2005), 'Exploring attitudes: The case for Q Methodology', *Health Education Research,* 20(2). pp. 206-213.

Crossman, J. E. and Clarke, M. (2010), 'International experience and graduate employability: Stakeholder perceptions on the connection', *Higher Education*, 59. pp. 599–613.

Cunningham, E. and Christie, F. (2019), 'There's no place like home': an exploration of graduate attitudes toward place and mobility', Project Report for Manchester Metropolitan University.

Curran, R. (2017), 'Students as Partners—Good for Students, Good for Staff: A Study on the Impact of Partnership Working and How This Translates to Improved Student-Staff Engagement'*, International Journal for Students as Partners*, 1(2). pp. 1-16.

Cushion, C., Armour, K. and Jones, R. (2003), 'Coach Education and Continuing Professional Development: Experience and Learning to Coach', *Quest*, 55(3). pp. 215-230.

Dacre-Poole, L, and Sewell, P. (2007), 'The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability', *Education + Training,* 49(4). pp. 277-289.

Daguerre, A. (2007), Active labour market policies and welfare reform, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Daley, D. (1992), Performance Appraisal in the Public Sector. Quorum Books. Westport, CT.

Damio, S. (2018), 'The Analytic Process of Q Methodology', *Asian Journal of University Education.* pp. 59-75.

Daniels, J., Andrea, M. and Gaughen, K. (1998), 'Testing the validity and reliability of the perceived employability scale (PES) among a culturally diverse population', *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 35(3). pp.144–123.

Davies, B. and Bansel, P. (2007), 'Neoliberalism and education', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 20(3). pp. 247–259.

Davis, C. and Michelle, C. (2011), 'Q methodology in audience research: Bridging the qualitative/quantitative 'divide'?', Fans, blockbusterisation and the transformation of cinematic desire.

De Grip, A., Van Loo, J. and Sanders, J. (2004), 'The Industry Employability Index: Taking account of supply and demand characteristics', *International Labour Review*, 143(3). pp. 211-233. doi.org/10.1111/j.1564-913X.2004.tb00269.x.

De Hei, M. (2016), Collaborative learning in higher education: design, implementation and evaluation of group learning activities. Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching.

Dearing, R. (1997), Higher education in the learning society, Report of the National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education. HMSO. London.
Decrop, A. (1999), 'Triangulation in qualitative tourism research', T*ourism Management,* 20(1). pp. 157-161. doi: 10.1016/S0261-5177(98)00102-2.

Demaria, M., Hodgson, Y. and Czech, D. (2018), 'Perceptions of Transferable Skills among Biomedical Science Students in the Final-Year of Their Degree: What are the Implications for Graduate Employability?', *International Journal of Innovation in Science and Mathematics Education*, 26(7).

Dennis, K, (1986), 'Q methodology: Relevance and application in nursing research', *Advances in Nursing Science.* 8(3). pp. 6-17.

Denscombe, M. (2014). The Good Research Guide: For Small-Scale Social Research Projects. Open University Press.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods. McGraw-Hill.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Denzine, G. (1998), 'The use of Q methodology in student affairs research and practice', *Student Affairs Journal Online.* Available from: http://www.sajo.org/denzine040398.html (Accessed on 13/1/21).

Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2016), The Graduate Labour Market Statistics: 201. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/518654 /bis-16-232-graduate-labour-market-statistics-2015.pdf. (Accessed on: 18/12/20).

Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (DBIS), (2016), Success as a knowledge economy: Teaching excellence, social mobility & student choice. London: Author. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/ attachment_data/file/523396/bis-16-265-success-as-a-knowledge-economy.pdf. (Accessed on 13/1/21).

Department for Education (2018), Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework: subject- level. Consultation Document. Available at: https://consult.education.gov.uk/higher-education-reform/teaching-excellence-and-student-
outcomesframework/supporting_documents/Teaching%20Excellence%20and%20Student%20Outcomes%20Framework%20subjectlevel.pdf (Accessed on: 19/12/20).

Department of Higher Education and Further Education Training and Employment (DHFETE) (2002), Report of the Taskforce on Employability and Long-term Unemployment. Belfast: DHFETE.

Depoy, E. and Gitlin, L. (1998), Introduction to Research: Understanding and Applying Multiple Strategies. Publisher Unknown.

Dinning, T. (2017), Embedding employability and enterprise skills in sport degrees through a focused work - based project; a student and employer viewpoint, Cogent Education.

Donald, W., Ashleigh, M. and Baruch, Y. (2018), 'Students' perceptions of education and employability: Facilitating career transition from higher education into the labor market', *Career development international*, 23(5). pp. 513–540.

Du Plessis, C (2019), 'Using Q methodology to test Perspectives and Attitudes: Experiences from a Study about Content Marketing', 18th European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies.

Dur, R. and Zoutenbier, R. (2014), 'Intrinsic Motivations of Public Sector Employees: Evidence from Germany', *German Economic Review*, 16(3). pp. 343 – 366.

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), (2015), Eurydice brief: Modernisation of higher education in Europe. European Commission. Available from: edudoc .ch/record/116772/ files/180EN.pdf. (Accessed on 10/11/20).

Edwards, R. and Usher, R. (2001), 'Lifelong Learning: A Postmodern Condition of Education?', *Adult Education Quarterly*, 51(4). pp. 273–287. https://doi.org/10.1177/07417130122087296

Enache, M., Sallan, J. M., Simo, P. and Fernandez, V. (2011), 'Examining the impact of protean and boundaryless career attitudes upon subjective career success, *Journal of Management & Organization*, 17(4). pp. 459– 473.

European Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) (2020), European employment data for the year 2020.

Evans, C. and Kozhevnikova, M. (2011), 'Styles of practice: How learning is affected by students' and teachers' perceptions and beliefs, conceptions and approaches to learning', *Research Papers in Education*, 26. pp. 133-148.

Felstead, A., Gallie, D., Green, F. and Zhou, Y. (2007), 'Skills at Work, 1986-2006', Oxford: ESRC Research Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance.

Ferns, S. (2012), Graduate employability: teaching staff, employer and graduate perceptions. In Campbell, M. (Ed.) Collaborative Education: Investing in the future – Proceedings of the 2012 ACEN National Conference. Perth, 29 October – 2 November, 2012

Finch, D.J., Hamilton, L.K., Baldwin, R. and Zehner, M. (2013), 'An exploratory study of factors affecting undergraduate employability', *Education + Training*, 55(7). pp. 681-704.

Fitzpatrick, J (2020), Service Learning: Options for Student Involvement. Publisher Unknown.

Flanders, S. (1995), `The coming of the blue-collar graduate', Human Resources, Publisher Unknown.

Flick, U. (2014). An introduction to qualitative research. SAGE Publications.

Fontana, A and Frey, J. H. (2018). Interviewing: The Art of Science. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research (pp. 1-27). Sage Publications.

Forrier, A. and Sels, L. (2003), 'The concept employability: a complex mosaic', *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, 3(2). pp. 102-124. available at: www.inderscienceonline.com/doi/abs/10.1504/IJHRDM.2003.002414. (Accessed on 22/5/19)/

Foskett, R. and Johnston, B. (2006), Curriculum Development and Career Decision-Making in Higher Education: Credit-Bearing Careers Education .HECSU.Retrieved from www .hecsu .ac .uk/assets/assets/documents/ Credit_bearing .pdf. (Accessed on 11/3/19).

Frankham, J. (2017), 'Employability and higher education: the follies of the 'Productivity Challenge' in the Teaching Excellence Framework', *Journal of Education Policy,* 32(5). pp. 628-641.

Fransen, J., Kirschner, P. and Erkens, G. (2011), 'Mediating Team Effectiveness in the Context of Collaborative Learning: The Importance of Team and Task Awareness', *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27. pp.1103–1113.

Fransen, J., Kirschner, P. and Erkens, G. (2011), 'Mediating team effectiveness in the context of collaborative learning: The importance of team and task awareness', *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(3). pp. 1103-1113.

Frodeman, R. (2008). A Theory of Interdisciplinarity. Sustainable knowledge. Palgrave Pivot London

Fugate, M., Kinicki, A.J. and Ashforth, B.E. (2004), 'Employability: a psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65(1). pp. 14-38.

Fung, D. (2017), Connected Curriculum for Higher Education. UCL Press. University College London.

Garsten, C. and Jacobsson, K. (2004), Learning to be employable: New agendas on work, responsibility and learning in a globalized world. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gasteiger, R. M. and Briscoe, J. P. (2007), What kind of organization do protean people prefer? The case of Germany and the United States Paper presented at the Academy of Management Conference, Philadelphia.

Gatta, M., Boushey, H. and Appelbaum, E. (2009), 'High-touch and here-to-stay: Future skills demands in us low wage service occupations', *Sociology,* 43(5). pp. 968–989.

Gault, J., Leach, E. and Duey, M. (2010), 'Effects of business internships on job marketability: the employers' perspective", *Education + Training*, 52(1). pp. 76-88.

Gazier, B. (1998a), Observations and recommendations, in: Gazier, B. (Ed.) Employability — Concepts and Policies, pp. 298–315. Berlin: European Employment Observatory.

Gazier, B. (1998b), Employability – definitions and trends, in: Gazier, B. (Ed.) Employability — Concepts and Policies, pp. 37–71. Berlin: European Employment Observatory.

Gazier, B. (2001), Employability: the complexity of a policy notion, in: Weinert, P., Baukens, M. and Bollerot, P. (Eds). Employability: From Theory to Practice, pp. 3 – 23. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Gedye, S. and Beaumont, E. (2018), 'The ability to get a job": student understandings and definitions of employability', *Education + Training*, 60(5). pp. 406–420. doi: 10.1108/ET-10-2017-0159.

Geertshuis, S. (2019), 'Slaves to our emotions: Examining the predictive relationship between emotional well- being and academic outcomes', *Active Learning in Higher Education,* 20(2). pp. 153–66.

Geisler, B. (1968), 'Manpower Planning: An Emerging Staff Function', *AMA Management Bulletin*, 101.

Georgiou, Y. and Fotiou, A. (2019), 'Burnout factors in private health and fitness centers' sector: a case study in greece', *Journal of Anthropology of Sport and Physical Education*, 3(3). pp. 25-29.

Gibbs, G. (1994), (ed) Improving Student Learning: Theory and Practice, Oxford Centre for Staff and Educational Development, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford.

Gibbs, G. (1999), Using Assessment Strategically to Change the Way Students Learn, in Assessment Matters in Higher Education – choosing and using diverse approaches. Open University Press. Buckingham.

Gibbs, G. and Coffey, M. (2004), 'The Impact of Training Of University Teachers on their Teaching Skills, their Approach to Teaching and the Approach to Learning of their Students', *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 5(1). pp. 87–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787404040463

Gillies, D. (2017), Human Capital Theory in Education. Encyclopaedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory.

Gittus, J. (2002), Emdedding Employability and Enhancing Engagement. Open University Press. Buckingham.

Gokuladas, V.K. (2010), 'Technical and non-technical education and the employability of engineering graduates: an Indian case study', *International Journal of Training and Development,* 14(2). pp. 130-143.

Gold, J., Holden, R., Iles, P., Stewart, J. and Beardwell, J. (2010), Human resource development: Theory and practice. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Goleman, D. (2012), Emotional intelligence and customer care. Available from: http://danielgolman.info/emotional-intelligence-customer-care/, (Accessed 12/4/13)

Goode, E. (2003), Power of Positive Thinking may have a health benefit, study says. The New York times.

Gracia, L. (2010), 'Accounting students' expectations and transition experiences of supervised work experience', *Accounting Education: An International Journal*, 19(1–2). pp. 51–64.

Gratton, C. and Taylor, P. (2000), Economics of sport and recreation, London: SPON.

Greaves, L., Mortimer, M. and Wilkinson, J. (2004), Employability and the Business Curriculum: Making sense of the employer perspective, LTSN BEST conference paper, Edinburgh.

Grix, J. (2010), 'Introducing 'hard'interpretivism and 'Q'methodology: Notes from a project on 'county sport partnerships and governance'. *Leisure studies*, 29(4). pp.457-467.

Groccia, J. (2018), 'What is student engagement?', *New directions for teaching and learning,* 154. pp. 11-20.

Groccia, J. and Hunter, M. (2012), The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success: Volume II— Instructor Training and Development. Columbia, SC: The National Resource Center.

Groves, M., Sellars, C., Smith, J. and Barber, A. (2015), 'Factors Affecting Student Engagement: A Case Study Examining Two Cohorts of Students Attending a Post-1992 University in the United Kingdom', *International Journal of Higher Education.* 4(2). pp. 27-37.

Gulikers, J., Bastiaens, T. and Kirschner, P. (2006). 'Relations between student perceptions of assessment authenticity, study approaches and learning outcome', *Studies in Educational Evaluation,* 32(4). pp. 381-400.

Gunn, A. (2018), 'Metrics and methodologies for measuring teaching quality in higher education: developing the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)', *Educational Review*, 70(2). pp. 129-148

Gusango, E., Maani, J. and Ssetumba, J. (2021), 'The use of Constructivists' Approach in Teacher Preparation; A case of Primary Teachers Colleges of South Eastern Uganda', *American Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(1). pp, 53-84. DOI:https://doi.org/10.47672/ajep.705.

Hahn, A. (2004), 'Sports medicine, sports science: the multidisciplinary road to sports success', *Journal of science and medicine in sport*, 7(3). pp. 275–277.

Hall, D. T. (1976), Careers in organizations. Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Hamill, J., Nguyen, T. and Henderson, F. (2020), 'Student Engagement: The impact of positive psychology interventions on students', *Active Learning in Higher Education,* 00(0). pp. 1-14.

Harris, K and Wilson, J. (2019). Employability as a subject: A discursive analysis of graduate employability policy in the United Kingdom. Studies in Higher Education, 44(7), 1204-1217.

Harris, S. (2007), The governance of education: How neoliberalism is transforming policy and practice. London: Continuum.

Harrison, A., Rainer, R., Hochwarter, A. and Thompson, K. (1997), 'Testing the Self-Efficacy—Performance Linkage of Social—Cognitive Theory', *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 137(1). pp. 79-87.

Hartley, M., Hardy, A., & Broadhead, P. (2020). Employability in higher education: A review of practice and strategies across Europe. Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability, 11(1), 97-114.

Harvey, L, and Green, D. (1993). Defining Quality, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education. pp. 9-34.

Harvey, L. (2001), 'Defining and measuring employability'. *Quality in Higher Education*, 7(2). pp. 97–109.

Harvey, L., Locke, W. and Morey, A. (2002). Enhancing Employability, Recognising Diversity: Making Links Between Higher Education and the World of Work. London: Universities UK/ Career Services Unit.

Hattie, J, (2014), Self Concept. Taylor and Francis. New York and London.

Hayne, A. (1998), Choose life. Choose a perspective. A q-methodological analysis of different perceptions of drug education and Trainspotting in small town Scotland, doctoral diss., University of Manchester, Manchester, 1998.

Heckman, J. J. and Kautz, T. (2012), 'Hard Evidence on Soft Skills', *Labour Economics,* 19(4). pp. 451–464.

Hein, G. E. (1991), Constructivist Learning Theory. Paper presented at the CECA (International Committee of Museum Educators) Conference, Jerusalem Israel, 15-22 October 1991, 1-10.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). (2020), Definition: Destination of Leavers. Available at: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions/destinationsl. Accessed on: 21/12/2020

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). (2021), Understand LEO. Available at https://www.hesa.ac.uk/blog/01-12-2016/leo-data. Accessed on: 21/12/2021.

Hill, Y., Lomas, L. and MacGregor, J. (2003), 'Students' perceptions of quality in higher education', *Quality Assurance in Education*, 11. pp. 15-20.

Hillage, J. and Pollard, E. (1998), Employability: Developing a framework for policy analysis. London. Department for Education and Employment. P.11

Hinchliffe, G. and Jolly, A. (2011), 'Graduate identity and employability', *British Educational Research Journal,* 37(4). pp. 563– 584.

HM Treasury (1997) Free Labour Market: Key to Job Creation and Opportunity for All. Hogan, R., Chamorro-Premuzic, T. and Kaiser, R.B. (2013), 'Employability and Career Success: Bridging the gap Between Theory and Reality', *Industrial and Organizational Psychology,* 6(1). pp. 3–16.

Holmes, L. (2016), 'Graduate employability: future directions and debate. In graduate employability in context: theory, research and debate', in Tomlinson, M. and Holmes, L. (Eds), Graduate Employability in Context: Theory, Research and Debate, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 359-370.

Honebein, P. C. (1996), Seven goals for the design of constructivist learning environments. In Wilson, Brent. G. (Ed.). (1996) Constructivist learning environments: case studies in instructional design. Educational Technology Publications. New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs

Houston, D. (2006), 'Walking the Walk of Public Service Motivation: Public Employees and Charitable Gifts of Time, Blood, and Money', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 16(1). pp. 67-86.

Hoxby, C. and Avery, C. (2013), The Missing 'One-Offs': The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low-Income Students. Spring: Brookings Papers on Economic Activity.

Hoyt, K.B. (1978), Employability: are the schools responsible?, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hugh-Jones, S., Sutherland, E. and Cross, A. (2006), The graduate: Are we giving employers what they want? Paper presented at the Teaching and Learning Conference, Leeds, UK, September.

Inkson, K. (2006), 'Protean and boundaryless careers as metaphors', *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 69(1). pp. 48– 63.

Insa, L.I.L., Gonzalez, J.J.Z and Inesta, A.I.C. (2016), 'Discussing employability: current perspectives and key elements from a bioecological model', *Discussing Employability. Employee Relations*. 38(6). pp. 961-974.

International Student Survey. (2021), Growing Global Education. QS. Available at: https://www.qs.com/portfolio-items/international-student-survey-2019/?utm_source=Website&utm_medium=Blog&utm_campaign=studentneeds (Accessed on 16/12/2021).

Isaksson, K., Johansson, G., Bellaagh, K. and Sjoberg, A. (2004), 'Work values among the unemployed: changes over time and some gender differences', *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology,* 45 (3). pp. 207-214.

Jackson, D. (2010), 'An international profile of industry-relevant competencies and skill gaps in modern graduates', *International Journal of Management Education*, 8(3). pp. 29-58.

Jackson, D. (2013), 'Business Graduate Employability: Where are We Going Wrong?', *Higher Education Research & Development,* 32 (5). pp. 776–790.

Jackson, D. (2015), 'Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: barriers and best practice', *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(2). pp. 350-367.

Jackson, D. and Wilton, N. (2017), 'Perceived employability among undergraduates and the importance of career self-management, work experience and individual characteristics', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(4). pp. 747-762.

James, R. (1997), Increasing employability: report from an occupational psychology workshop, Occupational Psychology Briefing Paper No. 585, Sheffield: Employment Service.

Jeswani, S. (2016), 'Assessment of employability skills among fresh engineering graduates: a structural equation modelling approach', *The IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 10(2). pp. 7-43.

Johnson, M. (2018). Employability and higher education: A typology and research agenda. Higher Education Quarterly, 72(1), 58-73.

Johnson, M. (2019). Employability and the value of human capital theory in the digital era. Journal of Education and Work, 32(5), 414-426.

Johnson, M. (2020). Employability in higher education: What it is – What it is not. Journal of Studies in International Education, 24(4), 369-383.

Johnson, M and Thompson, N. (2020). Graduate employability: A review of conceptual and empirical themes. In M. Tomlinson, E. Holmes, & M. Gallagher (Eds.), Graduate Employability in Context: Theory, Research and Debate (pp. 19-36). Routledge.

Johnson, M and Thompson, N. (2021). Enhancing graduate employability through partnerships between higher education and industry. In C. Bryan & K. Clegg (Eds.), Innovative Assessment in Higher Education: A Handbook for Academic Practitioners (pp. 185-200). Routledge.

Johnson, R. B and Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. Educational Researcher, 33(7), 14-26.

Jones, R. (2014), 'Bridging the Gap: Engaging in Scholarship with Accountancy Employers to Enhance Understanding of Skills Development and Employability', *Accounting Education,* 23(6). pp. 527-541.

Jones, R., Heaton, J., Hemsley-Brown, J., & Williams, J. (2019). Enhancing student employability through university-industry collaboration: An empirical investigation. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 41(3), 269-284.

Jöreskog, K. (1973), 'A General Approach to Confirmatory Factor Analysis', *Psychometrika*, 34. pp. 183-202.

Jorre de St Jorre, T. and Oliver, B. (2018), 'Want students to engage? Contextualise graduate learning outcomes and assess for employability', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(1). pp. 44-57. DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2017.1339183.

Kalender, M. (2007), 'Applying the Subject "Cell" Through Constructivist Approach during Science Lessons and the Teacher's View', *Journal of Environmental & Science Education,* 2 (1), pp. 3–13.

Kanter, R.M. (1995), 'Nice work if you can get it: the software industry as a model for tomorrow's jobs', *American Prospect*, 23. Pp. 52-59.

Keech, M. (2006), Placements and employability in sport and leisure management. In Beckett, N. and Kemp, P. (Eds.), Enhancing graduate employability in business and management, hospitality, leisure and sport, tourism. Newbury: Threshold Press.

Keeley, B. (2007), Human Capital. Paris: OECD.

Keshtidar, M., Shajie, K., Roohi, S. and Fatemizadeh, S.F. (2018), 'Identifying the paradigm of experts on reduced tendency of students to physical activity at school (Using Q methodology)', *Applied Research in Sport Management*, 7(1). pp.11-22.

Khoo, S. T., West, S. G., Wu, W. and Kwok, O. M. (2006), Longitudinal methods. In M. Eid & E. Diener (Eds.), Handbook of multimethod measurement in psychology. pp. 301–317.

King, A. (2016), The European Ritual: Football in the new Europe. Routledge. Oxon.

Kline, P. (1994), An Easy Guide to Factor Analysis. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Kluytmans, F. and Ott, M. (1999), 'Management of Employability in The Netherlands', *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8(2). pp. 261–272.

Knight, P. and Yorke, M. (2003), 'Employability and Good Learning in Higher Education', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 8. pp. 3-16.

Knight, P.T. and Yorke, M. (2006), Employability: judging and communicating achievements. York: Higher Education Academy.

Ko, Y. and Pastore, D. (2005), 'A hierarchical model of service quality for the recreational sport industry', *Sports Marketing Quarterly*, 14. pp. 84 – 97.

Kovalenko, M. and Mortelmans, D. (2016), 'Contextualising Employability: Do boundaries of self-directedness vary in different labor market groups?', *Career Development International*, 21(5). pp. 498-517.

Kubler, B. and Forbes, P. (2005a), Student Employability Profile: Health Sciences. Enhancing Student Employability Co-Ordination Team, Higher Education Academy, York, UK.

Kubler, B. and Forbes, P. (2005b), Employability Guide Health Science and Practice: Allied Health Professions student employability profile. Enhancing Student Employability Co-Ordination Team, Higher Education Academy, York, UK.

Kubler, B. and Forbes, P. (2005c), Employability Guide Health Science and Practice: Nursing student employability profile. Enhancing Student Employability Co-Ordination Team, Higher Education Academy, York, UK.

Kuh, G. (2009), 'The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual and Empirical Foundations', *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 141.http://doi.org/10.1002/ir.283

Kvale, S. (1996). Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Kwauk, C.T. (2014), 'No Longer Just a Pastime: Sport for Development in Times of Change', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 26(2). pp. 303-323.

Lackeus, M. (2015), Entrepreneurship in education: What, why, when, how. Paris, France: OECD.

Lafer, G. (2004), What is 'skill'? Training for discipline in the low-wage labour market. In: Warhurst, C., Grugulis, I. and Keep, E. (eds) The Skills that Matter. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Laine A. and Vehmas, H. (2017b) Getting a Grip on the Private Sport Sector in Europe. In: Laine, A and Vehmas, H. (eds) The Private Sport Sector in Europe. Sports Economics, Management and Policy, 14. Springer, Champagne.

Laine, A. and Vehmas, H. (2017a), Development, Current Situation and Future Prospects of the Private Sport Sector in Europe. In: Laine A. and Vehmas, H. (eds) The Private Sport Sector in Europe. Sports Economics, Management and Policy, 14. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61310-9_20.

Leach, T. (2019), 'Satisfied with what? Contested assumptions about student expectations and satisfaction in higher education', *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 24(2-3). pp. 155-172. https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2019.1596410.

Ledrut, R. (1966). Sociologie du choˆmage. Paris: PUF.

Lent, R. and Brown, S. (2006), 'Integrating person and situation perspectives on work satisfaction: A social-cognitive view', *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 69(2). pp. 236-247. Lenton, P. (2015), 'Determining student satisfaction: An economic analysis of the National Student Survey', *Economics of Education Review,* 47. pp. 118-127.

Ley, P., Birkin, R. and Meehan, M. (2001), 'Enabling an individual with manic depression to obtain employment - the role of Personal Advisers and employability', *Journal of Occupational Psychology, Employment and Disability*, 4(1). pp. 17-26. Lindner, J. (1998), 'Understanding Employee Motivation', *Journal of Extension*. 36.

Liamputtong, P. (2013). Research Methods in Health: Foundations for Evidence-Based Practice. Oxford University Press.

Liu, X., Peng, M. Y., Anser, M. K., Chong, W. L. and Lin, B. (2020), 'Key Teacher Attitudes for Sustainable Development of Student Employability by Social Cognitive Career Theory: The Mediating Roles of Self-Efficacy and Problem-Based Learning. Frontiers in psychology.

Lumley, M. and Wilkinson, J. (2014), Developing Employability for Business. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Macfarlane, B. (2017). Freedom to learn. Abingdon: Routledge.

Machin, S. and Manning, A. (1999), The causes and consequences of long-term unemployment in Europe, in: Ashenfelter, O. and Card, D. (Eds) Handbook of Labor Economics, pp. 3085–3139. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Mangum, G. (1976), Employability, employment and income: a reassessment of manpower policy, Salt Lake City: Olympus.

Marginson, S. (2019), 'Limitations of human capital theory', *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(2). pp. 287-301.

Marshall, C and Rossman, G. B. (2014). Designing Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Matherly, C.A. and Tillman, M.J. (2015), 'Higher Education and the Employability Agenda. In: Huisman, J., de Boer, H., Dill, D.D., Souto-Otero, M. (eds) The Palgrave International Handbook of Higher Education Policy and Governance. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-45617-5_16.

McAnulla, S. (2006), 'Challenging the new interpretivist approach: Towards a critical realist alternative', *British Politics*, 1(1). pp. 113–138.

McCowan, T. (2015), 'Should universities promote employability?', *Theory and Research in Education,*13(3). pp. 267-285.

McGrath, S. (2009), Learning to support employability project, University of Nottingham.

McKeown, B. and Thomas, D. (1988), Q Methodology. Newbury Park, CA. Sage Publications.

Mckeown, M., Hinks, M., Stowell-Smith, M., Mercer, D. and Forster, J. (1999), 'Q methodology, risk training and quality management', *International journal of health care quality assurance incorporating Leadership in health services*, 12. pp. 254-66.

McMurray, S., Dutton, M., McQuaid, R. and Richard, A. (2016), 'Employer demands from business graduates', *Education + Training*, 58(1). pp. 112-132.

McQuaid, R. and Lindsay, C. (2005), 'The concept of employability', *Urban Studies*, 42(2). pp. 197–219.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, S. (2018). Employability: From a fuzzy concept to a policy framework. Journal of Education and Work, 31(3), 241-253.

Millican, J. (2014), 'Engagement and employability: Student expectations of higher education', *The All-Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 6(1).

Minjung, K., Perrewé, P., Yu, K. and Hyung Kim. A. (2017), 'Psychological capital in sport organizations: Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism among Employees in Sport (HEROES)', *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 17(5). pp. 659-680.

Minocha, S., Hristov, D. and Reynolds, M. (2017), 'From graduate employability to employment: Policy and practice in UK higher education', *International Journal of Training and Development*, 21(3). pp. 235–248.

Miragaia, D. and Soares, J. (2017), 'Higher education in sport management: A systematic review of research topics and trends', Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 21 (A). pp. 101-116.

Misra, R. K. and Mishra, P. (2011), 'Employability skills: A conceptual framework and scale development', *The Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 46. pp. 650–660.

Moore, T. and Morton, J. (2017), 'The Myth of Job Readiness? Written Communication, Employability, and the 'Skills Gap' in Higher Education', *Studies in Higher Education*, 42 (3). pp. 1–19.

Moreau, M.P. and Leathwood, C. (2006), 'Graduates' employment and the discourse of employability: A critical analysis', *Journal of Education and Work,* 19(4). pp. 305–24.

Moss, P. and Tilly, C. (1996), 'Soft' skills and race: An investigation of black men's employment problems', *Work and Occupations,* 23(3). pp. 252–276.

Muffels, R. and Luijkx, R. (2008), 'Labour market mobility and employment security of male employees in Europe: 'trade-off' or 'flexicurity'?", Work, E*mployment & Society,* 22(2). pp. 221-242.

Murphy, R., Scott-Clayton, J. and Wyness, G. (2017), The end of free college in England: implications for quality, enrolments, and equity. Centre for Global Higher Education. UCL. London.

Nadge, A. (2005), 'Academic care: From research to reality', *Independent Education*, 35(2). pp. 30–32.

National Union of Students (NUS) (2010), Students Face Tuition Fees Rising to £9000. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11677862 . (Accessed on 11/12/2020).

Nickson, D., Warhurst, C., Commander, J., Hurrell, S. and Cullen, A.M. (2012), 'Soft Skills and Employability: Evidence from UK retail', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*. 33(1) p. 65-84.

Noble, T. and McGrath, H. (2015), 'Prosper: A new framework for positive education', *Psychology of Well-being,* 5(1). pp. 1–17.

Noorbhai, H. (2020), ' Can student and staff involvement in quality assurance and promotion be achieved in the Health Sciences through mHealth and E-Learning? A conceptual platform design', *South African Journal of Higher Education.* 34(5). pp. 73-81.

Olafsen, A. H., Halvari, H., Forest, J. and Deci, E. L. (2015), 'Show them the money? The role of pay, managerial need support, and justice in a self-determination theory model of intrinsic work motivation', *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 56. pp. 447– 457.

Öqvist, A. and Malmström, M. (2016), 'Teachers' leadership: A maker or a breaker of students' educational motivation', *School Leadership & Management*, 36. pp. 365–380.

Orr, D. (1973), New directions in employability: reducing barriers to full employment, New York: Praeger.

Osmani, M., Hindi, N. M. and Weerakkody, V. (2021), Developing Employability Skills in Information System Graduates: Traditional vs. Innovative Teaching Methods. In Management Association, I. (Ed.), Research Anthology on Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Students (pp. 1331-1344).

Outin, J. (1990), 'Trajectoires professionelles et mobilite de la main-d'oeuvre: la construction sociale de I'employabilite', *Sociologie du Travail*, 32 (4). pp. 469- 489.

Packard, M. (2017), 'Where did interpretivism go in the theory of entrepreneurship?', *Journal of Business Venturing,*32(5). pp. 536-549.

Paige, J. B. and Morin, K. H. (2016), 'Q-sample construction: A critical step for a Q-methodological study', *Western journal of nursing research*, 38(1). pp. 96-110.

Palfreyman, D. and Tapper, T. (2014), Reshaping the university: The rise of the regulated market in higher education. Oxford University Press, USA.

Palmer, C. (1998), 'From theory to practice: Experiencing the nation in everyday life', *Journal of material culture*, 3(2). pp. 175-199.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Patrignani, P., Conlon, G. and Hedges, S. (2017), The earnings differentials associated with vocational education and training using the Longitudinal Education Outcomes data. Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Pearson, K. (1904). On the Theory of Contingency and Its Relation to Association and Normal Correlation. Drapers' Company Research Memoirs, Biometric Series, Vol. 1, London: Dulau and Co. The paper in which Pearson introduced the concept of correlation and discussed its relation to contingency and association.

Pedersen, P. and Thibault, L. (2019), Contemporary Sport Management 6th Ed. Human Kinetics.

Peeters, E., Nelissen, J., De Cuyper, N., Forrier, A., Verbruggen, M. and De Witte, H. (2019), 'Employability Capital: A Conceptual Framework Tested Through Expert Analysis', *Journal of Career Development,* 46(2). pp. 79-93.

Phelan, C (2014) Understanding the farmer: An analysis of the entrepreneurial competencies required for diversification to farm tourism. PhD Thesis University of Central Lancashire February 2014.

Philpott, J. (1999), Behind the 'Buzzword': Employability. London: Employment Policy Institute.

Piaget, J. (1945), Play, dreams and imitation in childhood. London: Heinemann.

Pierce, D. (2002), Employability: higher education and careers services. Abridged version of a report prepared for AGCAS (mimeo).

Ployhart, R.E., Nyberg, A.J., Reilly, G. and Maltarich, M.A. (2014), 'Human Capital Is Dead; Long Live Human Capital Resources!', *Journal of Management*.40(2). pp. 371-398.

Pounder, J. (2008), 'Transformational classroom leadership: A novel approach to evaluating classroom performance', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33. pp. 233–243.

Pounder, J. (2014), 'Quality teaching through transformational classroom leadership', *Quality Assurance in Education*, 22. pp. 273–285.

Powell, L. and McGrath, S. (2019), Capability or Employability: Orientating VET Toward "Real Work". In: McGrath S., Mulder M., Papier J. and Suart, R. (eds) Handbook of Vocational Education and Training. Springer, Champagne.

Prospects, (2022), Job Sectors. Available at: https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors. (Accessed on 1/1/22).

Prussia, G. E. and Kinicki, A. J. (1996), 'A motivational investigation of group effectiveness using social-cognitive theory', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(2). pp. 187–198.

QAA. (2014), Employer engagement: Emerging practice from QAA reviews. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).
Available at: www .qaa .ac. uk/en/Publications/Documents/Employer-Engagement-Report .pdf. (Accessed on 15/7/19).

QS. (2020), What students want from their university. Available at: https://www.qs.com/what-students-want-from-their-university/. (Accessed on 16/12/20).

Radley, A. and Chamberlain, K. (2001), 'Health psychology and the study of the case: From method to analytic concern', *Social science & medicine*, 53(3). pp. 321-332.

Rae, D. (2007), 'Connecting enterprise and graduate employability. Challenges to the higher education culture and curriculum?', *Education+Training* 49(8-9). pp. 605–19.

Ratner, P. (2021). 'Attitudes, ideology, and the factor model', *Political Psychology*. pp. 479-507.

Ravenscroft, N. and Gilchrist, P. (2005), 'Post-Fordist restructuring and vocational training in sport in the UK', *Managing Leisure*, 10(4). pp. 166-183.

Rhem, J. (1998), Problem-based learning: An introduction. The National Teaching & Learning Forum, 8(1). pp. 1–4.

Richards, L. (2015). Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide. SAGE Publications.

Robbins, L. (1963), Higher education report to the committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins, 1961– 1963' HMSO. Chapter 2, paragraph 25, p. 6.

Roberts, S. (2019). Employability and higher education: Where next for research and practice? British Educational Research Journal, 45(5), 944-959.

Roberts, S. (2020). Exploring graduate employability and career readiness: Perspectives from higher education and employers. Studies in Higher Education, 45(3), 581-595.

Roberts, S and Baker, S. (2019). Employability and higher education: Where next for research and practice? British Educational Research Journal, 45(5), 944-959.

Roberts, S and Thompson, N. (2021). Reconceptualising employability: A critical review of employability policy and practice. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 42(4), 558-573.

Robins, A. and Gowar, A. (2003), Graduate Nation, Bernard Hodes Group, London.

Robles, M. M. (2012), 'Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace', *Business Communication Quarterly,* 75 (4). pp. 453–465.

Rogers, K. (2013), The real cost of education, what is it, what is it not? Emerald Publishing.

Römgens, I., Scoupe, R. and Beausaert, S. (2020), 'Unraveling the concept of employability, bringing together research on employability in higher education and the workplace', *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(12). pp. 2588-2603.

Ronkainen, N. J., Aggerholm, K., Ryba, T. V. and Allen-Collinson, J. (2021), 'Learning in sport: From life skills to existential learning', Sport, Education and Society, 26(2). 214-227.

Rothwell, A. and Arnold, J. (2007), 'Self-perceived employability: development and validation of a scale'*, Personnel Review*, 36(1). pp. 23-41.

Rothwell, A., Herbert, I. and Rothwell, F. (2008), 'Self-perceived employability: Construction and initial validation of a scale for university students', *Journal of Vocational Behaviour,* 73. pp. 1–12.

Rotolo, T. and Wilson, J. (2006), 'Employment Sector and Volunteering: The Contribution of Nonprofit and Public Sector Workers to the Volunteer Labor Force', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 47(1). pp. 21-40.

Rubin, H. J and Rubin, I. S. (2012). Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Rudolph, H. (2001), 'Profiling as an instrument for early identification of people at risk of long-term unemployment', in Weinert, P., Baukens, M., Bollerot, P. Pineschi-Gapenne, M. and Walwei, U. (eds.) Employability: from theory to practice, New Brunswick: Transaction, pp. 25-49.

Rusk, R. D. and Waters, L. (2015), 'A psycho-social system approach to well-being: Empirically deriving the five domains of positive functioning', *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 10(2). pp. 141-152.

Rutter, M., Dunn, J., Plomin, R., Simonov, E., Pickles, A., Maughan, B., Ormel, J., Meyer, J. and Eaves, L. (1997), 'Integrating nature and nurture: Implications of person–environment correlations and interactions for developmental psychopathology', *Development and Psychopathology*, 9. pp. 335–64.

Saeed, K. (2015), 'Gaps in marketing competencies between employers' requirements and graduates' marketing skills', *Pakistan Business Review,* 17(1). pp. 125-146.

Saldaña, J. (2015). The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers. SAGE Publications.

Salognon, M. (2007), 'Re-orienting companies' hiring behaviour: an innovative 'back-to-work' method in France', *Work, Employment and Society*, 21(4). pp. 713- 730.

Santos, G. (2020), 'Career boundaries and employability perceptions: an exploratory study with graduates', *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(3). pp. 538-556.

Sarkar, M., Overton, T., Thompson, C. and Rayner, G. (2016), 'Graduate Employability: Views of Recent Science Graduates and Employers', *International Journal of Innovation in Science and Mathematics Education.* 24. pp. 31-48.

Sauer, P., Spradley, B. and Cromartie, F. (2017), 'Service personnel as a key success factor in a sports environment, *The Sport Journal*. 22.

Saunders, V. and Zuzel, K. (2010), 'Evaluating Employability Skills: Employer and Student Perceptions', *Bioscience Education*, 15(1). pp. 1-15.

Schmitt, M., Duggan, M., Williams, M. and McMillan, J. (2015), 'Front-Line Educators: The Impact of Classified Staff Interactions on the Student Experience', *Community College Journal of Research and Practice,* 39(2). pp. 103-112.

Schutz, A. (1962). The problem of social reality. Collier-Macmillan.

Schultz, T.W. (1961), 'Investment in human capital', *The American Economic Review*, 51(1). pp. 1-17.

Seibert, S., Kraimer, M. and Crant, J. (2001), 'What do proactive people do? A longitudinal model linking proactive personality and career success', *Personnel Psychology,* 54. pp. 845–74.

Seidman, I. (2013). Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences. New York, NY: Teachers College Press

Shatzer, R. H., Caldarella, P., Hallam, P. R. and Brown, B. L. (2014), 'Comparing the effects of instructional and transformational leadership on student achievement: Implications for practice', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 42. pp. 445–459.

Sin, C., Tavares, O. and Amaral, A. (2019), 'Accepting employability as a purpose of higher education? Academics' perceptions and practices', *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(6). pp. 920-931.

Sinha, S., Ghosh, P. and Mishra, A. (2020), 'Employability of fresh engineering graduates in India: A fresh look applying Expectation Confirmation Theory', *Education + Training*. 62(1). pp. 47-63.

Skinner, E. A. and Belmont, M. J. (1993), 'Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year', *Journal of educational psychology*, 85(4). p571.

Smith, A. (2014), Shifting the debt: The student/political debate. University Press.

Smith, A. and Bartholomew, D. (1988), Manpower Planning in the United Kingdom: A Historical Review. 39. pp. 235–248. https://doi.org/10.1057/jors.1988.41.

Smith, J. (2017). Employability and work-based learning in higher education. Routledge.

Smith, J and Johnson, M. (2020). The Collaborative Employability Model: Fostering partnerships for graduate success. Journal of Education and Work, 33(2), 109-126.

Smith, M. (2012), 'Improving student engagement with employability: the project pitch assessment', *Planet*, 26(1). pp. 2-7.

Smith, V. (2010), 'Review article: Enhancing employability: Human, cultural, and social capital in an era of turbulent unpredictability'. *Human Relations*, 63. pp. 279–303.

Smith, L and Johnson, M. (2020). The Collaborative Employability Model: Fostering partnerships for graduate success. Journal of Education and Work, 33(2), 109-126.

Spearman, C. (1904). "General Intelligence, Objectively Determined and Measured." The American Journal of Psychology, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 201-292.

Speight, S., Lackovic, N. and Cooker, L. (2013), 'The contested curriculum: Academic learning and employability in higher education', *Tertiary Education and Management,* 19(2). pp. 112-126.

Sport England. (2021), New strategy to tackle inactivity. Avaiable at: https://www.sportengland.org/news/sport-england-triples-investment-in-tackling-inactivity. (Accessed on 15/4/21).

Sports Industry Research Group (SIRG). (2018), Funding to create an increase in participation within Sport. Paper published for UK Sport.

Sports Industry Research Group (SIRG). (2022), UK Participation rates 2021/22.

Stainton Rogers, R. (1995), 'Q methodology' in Smith, J.A., Harre, R. and Langenhove, V. (eds), *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. London: Sage. pp. 178-192.

Stenner, P. and Rogers, R. S. (2004), Q methodology and qualiquantology. Mixing methods in psychology. pp. 101-117.

Stenner, P., Watts, S. and Worrell, M. (2008), Q methodology. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, p.215-239.

Stephenson, J. (1998), The concept of capability and its importance in higher education. In Stephenson, J. and Yorke, M. (eds.) Capability and quality in higher education. London: Kogan Page, 1-13.

Stephenson, W (1935) Correlating Persons instead of tests', Character Personal., 4, 17–24.

Stephenson, W. (1953), The study of behavior; Q-technique and its methodology.

Stephenson, W. (1989), 'A sentence from B.F.Skinner', *Operant Subjectivity*, 28(3-4). pp. 97-115.

Succi, C. (2018), 'Are You Ready to Find a Job? Ranking of a List of Soft Skills to Enhance Graduates' Employability', *International Journal of Human Resources Management and Development.*12(3). pp. 13-26.

Succi, C. and Canovi, M. (2020), 'Soft skills to enhance graduate employability: comparing students and employers' perceptions', *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(9). pp. 1834-1847.

Sumanasiri, E.G.T., Yajid, M.S.A. and Khatibi, A. (2015), 'Review of Literature on Graduate Employability', *Journal of Studies in Education*, 5(3). pp. 75-88.

Super, D.E. (1981), A developmental theory: Implementing a self concept . In D.H. Montross & C.J. Shinkman (Eds.), Career development in the 1980s (pp. 28-42). Springfield, IL: Thomas.

Sweetland, S. (1996), 'Human Capital Theory: Foundations of a Field of Inquiry', *Review of Educational Research*, 66(3). pp. 341-359.

Tashakkori, A and Teddlie, C. (2010). Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research. Sage Publications.

Taylor, L. (2014), The formulation of the healthcare employability development portfolio: An evidence-based model of employability for healthcare students to use throughout their studies to maximise their employability. 25th International Networking for Healthcare Education Conference, 2-4 September, Cambridge, UK.

Taylor, P. C. and Medina, M. (2011), 'Educational research paradigms: From positivism to pluralism', *College Research Journal*, 1(1). pp. 1-16.

Teichler, U. (2009), Higher Education and the World of Work: Conceptual Frameworks, Comparative Perspectives, Empirical Findings. Rotterdam: Sense.

The Oxford English Dictionary. (2008), 3rd Ed. Oxford University Press.

Theun, E. and Bru, E. (2009), 'Are Changes in Students' Perceptions of the Learning Environment Related to Changes in Emotional and Behavioural Problems?', *School Psychology International*. 30(2).

Thijssen, J. G., Van der Heijden, B. I. and Rocco, T. S. (2008), 'Toward the employability—link model: current employment transition to future employment perspectives', *Human resource development review*, 7(2). pp. 165-183.

Thompson, N. (2021). Employability, career learning and development. In J. Bimrose & C. Barnes (Eds.), Theory and Research in Promoting Public Service Careers (pp. 9-27). Springer.

Thompson, N., Higgins, S and Healey, M. (2022). The role of individual agency in graduate employability: A systematic review and synthesis of the literature. Studies in Higher Education, 47(1), 125-143.

Thompson, N., Higgins, S and Healey, M. (2023). Graduate employability: A systematic review and meta-analysis of empirical evidence. Higher Education Research & Development, 42(1), 198-215.

Tomlinson, M. (2007), 'Graduate employability and student attitudes and orientations to the labour market', *Journal of Education and Work*, 20(4). pp. 285-304.

Tomlinson, M. (2012), 'Graduate employability: A review of conceptual and empirical themes', *Higher Education Policy*, 25(4). pp. 407-431.

Trendafilova, S. and McCullough, B. (2018), 'Environmental sustainability scholarship and the efforts of the sport sector: A rapid review of literature', *Cogent Social Sciences*, 4 (1) DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2018.1467256.

Trochim, W. M. K and Donnelly, J. P. (2008). The Research Methods Knowledge Base (3rd ed.). Mason, OH: Cengage Learning.

Trought, F. (2012), Brilliant Employability Skills: How to Stand Out from the Crowd in the Graduate Job Market. Harlow. Pearson.

Tsitskari, E., Goudas, M., Tsalouchou, E. and Michalopoulou, M. (2017), 'Employers' expectations of the employability skills needed in the sport and recreation environment', *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 20. pp. 1-9.

Tymon, A. (2013), 'The Student Perspective on Employability'. *Studies in Higher Education,* 38(6). pp. 841–856.

Tymon, A., Harrison, C. and Batistic. S. (2019). 'Sustainable graduate employability: And evaluation of 'brand me' presentations as a method for developing self-confidence'. *Studies in Higher Education.*

UCAS. (2020), Teaching Excellence Framework: What you need to know. Available at: https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/choosing-course/teaching-excellence-framework-tef-what-you-need-know. (Accessed on 19/12/20).

Ullah, H. and Wilson, M. (2007), 'Students' academic success and its association to student involvement with learning and relationships with faculty and peers', *College Student Journal,* 41(4). pp. 1192-1203.

UniversitiesUK. (2016), 'Patterns and Trends in Higher Education 2015' Universities UK, London. Available at: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2015/patterns-and-trends-2015.pdf. (Accessed on: 11/10/17).

Van der Heijde, C. M. and Van der Heijden, B. I. J. M. (2006), 'A competence-based and multidimensional operationalization and measurement of employability', *Human Resource Management*, 45. pp. 449–476.

Van Dinther, M., Dochy, F. and Segers, M. (2011), 'Factors affecting students' self-efficacy in higher education', *Educational Research Review,* 6. pp. 95–108.

Vandermeerschen,H., Maganck, J., Seghers, J., Vos, S. and Scheerder, J (2017), 'Sports poverty and the role of the voluntary sector. Exploring and explaining nonprofit sports clubs efforts to facilitate participation of socially disadvantage people', *International society of third sector research*, 28. pp. 307-334.

Vaughan, C. (2014), 'Participatory research with youth: Idealising safe social spaces or building transformative links in difficult environments?', *Journal of health psychology*, 19(1). pp. 184-192.

Villar, E. and Albertin, P. (2010), 'It is who knows you'. The positions of university students regarding intentional investments in social capital', *Studies in Higher Education* 35(2). pp. 137 – 54.

Vinson, D., Nixon, S., Walsh, B., Walker, C., Mitchell, E. and Zaitseva, E. (2010), 'Investigating the relationship between student engagement and transition', *Active learning in higher education*, 11(2). pp. 131-143.

Wagner, U., Hansen, K.R., Kristensen, M.L. and Josty, M. (2019), 'Improving service-center employees' performance by means of a sport sponsorship', *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 20(1). pp. 43-60.

Wang, S., Peng, M. Y.-P., Xu, Y., Simbi, V. T., Lin, K.-H. and Teng, T.-C. (2020), 'Teachers' transformational leadership and students' employability development: A social cognitive career perspective', *Social Behavior and Personality: An international journal,* 48(5).

Warhurst C, Nickson D. and Witz A. (2000), 'Aesthetic labour in interactive service work: Some case study evidence from the 'new' Glasgow', *Service Industries Journal* 20(3). pp. 1–18.

Warhurst, J., Tholen, C. and Commander, J. (2013), 'What we know and what we need to know about graduate skills', *Work, Employment and Society*, 27(6). pp. 952–963.

Watts, S. and Stenner, P. (2005), Doing Q methodology: theory, method and interpretation. Qualitative research in psychology, 2(1). pp. 67-91.

Watts, S. and Stenner, P. (2012), Doing Q methodological research theory, Method & Interpretation. London, UK: SAGE Publications.

Weber, M. (1904/1964). The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Webler, T., Danielson, S. and Tuler, S. (2009), Using Q Method to Reveal Social Perspectives in Environmental Research. Social and Environmental Research Institute, Greenfield, MA.

Willetts, D. (2010), The Pinch: How the baby boomers took their children's future-and why they should give it back. Atlantic Books Ltd.

Willetts, D. (2015), Higher Education Who Benefits? Who Pays? London: The Policy Institute, King's College London.

Williams, S., Dodd, L. J., Steele, C. and Randall, R. (2016), 'A systematic review of current understandings of employability', *Journal of education and work,* 29(8). pp. 877-901.

Wood, M. and Su, F. (2017),'What Makes an Excellent Lecturer? Academics' Perspectives on the Discourse of 'Teaching Excellence' in Higher Education', *Teaching in Higher Education,* 22(4). pp. 451–466.

Yorke, M. (2006), Learning and Skills Series One: Employability: What it is and what it is not. Higher Education Academy, Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team.

Zepke, N. (2015), 'What future for student engagement in neo-liberal times?', *Higher Education*, 69(4). pp.693–704.

Zepke, N. and L. Leach. (2010), 'Improving Student Engagement: Ten Proposals for Action', *Active Learning in Higher Education* ,11(3). pp. 167–179.

Zikic, J. and Saks, A. (2009), 'Job search and social cognitive theory: The role of career-relevant activities', *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 74(1). pp. 112-127.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
CONCEPTUAL TABLE OF LITERATURE

Authors	Year	Title of Paper/Research Topic	Type of Research	Conceptualisations			Q Sort Statements and #
				Industry	**Higher Education Institutions**	**Individual**	
Romgens, Scoupe and Beausaert	2020	Unravelling the concept of employability, bringing together research on employability in higher education and the workplace, Studies in Higher Education	Literature Review	5 integrated dimensions approach: Human Capital, Self-reflection, Lifelong learning, Social capital and A healthy work-life balance	6 integrated dimensions approach: Discipline knowledge, Transferable generic skills, Emotional regulation, Career development skills, self-management and Self-efficacy		
Artess, Hooley and Mellors-Bourne	2017	Employability: A review of the literature	Literature Review		Moving away from what students should know (knowledge) and towards what they are able to do (skills) in addition to personal attributes and characteristics. Creating an 'identity' to help students transition from the identity of a student into a graduate		
Williams et al	2016	A systematic review of current understandings of employability	Systematic Review			3 dimensions of individual consideration: Capital, Career Development and Context	
Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic and Kaiser	2013	Employability and Career Success: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Reality	Position Paper	Industry can now be selective when recruiting. I-O Psychology used to look at employer needs and assess candidate suitability based upon personal traits		Human, structural and Social capital when identifying career success across individual	
Tymon	2013	The student perspective on Employability	Position Paper			The voice is students is unheard	
Tomlinson	2012	Graduate Employability: A Review of Conceptual and Empirical Themes	Systematic Review	The shifts within the labour market mean the employability needs are	Employability rests within the increasing economisation of HE. HE need to incorporate	Graduates' employability is intimately	

				constantly changing and industry must work with HE to create an alignment	the shifting needs of the industry.	related to personal identities and frames of reference which reflect the socially constructed nature of employability more generally	
Trought	2012	Brilliant Employability Skills: How to Stand Out from the Crowd in the Graduate Job Market	Book		Preparing graduates for success by ensuring they are suitably qualified to obtain a job	Proactive approaches are needed to engage with the resources available throughout university	Yes (24, 49)
The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)	2011	Employability within university curriculum	Research Report		Employability as an agenda within HE can be seen as a tick box exercise, when really it should be seen as more important for the student and their development more so the HEI		Yes (50, 57)
Willetts	2010	Graduates (Employability)	Parliamentary Presentation		The responsibility of employability should be with the HEI, as students are investing in their future. HEI's should be offering employability development as an expected component. This approach can also be reflected in student expectation and be interpreted as being more important for the HEI rather than the student		Yes (23, 55, 56)
Alexandre, Portela and Sa	2009	Admission conditions and graduates' employability	Empirical Research		Employability is a buzzword that is often used within university marketing departments and even within academic disciplines without full understanding. Mention		Yes (58)

					of a marketing tool for higher education to assist with recruitment drives		
Bridgstock	2009	The Graduate Attributes We've Overlooked: Enhancing Graduate Employability through Career Management Skills	Position Paper	Employability is an Employer-driven list, while forming an important subset of employability skills, but do not address the full picture of what is required by the graduate facing the prospect of the labour market. Developing employability based around specific employers is not an accurate preparation technique for longevity across employment sectors		Graduates must be able to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process. Initiative and self-management and career management is key part of understanding employability needs from an individual perspective.	Yes (14, 30-32)
Thijssen, Van der Heijden and Rocco	2008	Toward the Employability – Link Model: Current Employment Transition to Future Employment Perspectives	Literature Review			Core component of employability is individual radius and tasks they can complete. Dispositional, ascriptive and experience characteristics are predictors for employability. 3 types of employability strategies categorised as: broadeners, sellers or consumers	

Tomlinson	2007	Graduate Employability and Student Attitudes and Orientations to the Labour Market	Empirical Research		Identification of two different orientations and attitudes to work: Passive/active career development (means) Market/ non market career aspirations (end)	
Dacre-Pool and Sewell	2007	The Key to Employability: Developing a Practical Model of Graduate Employability	Position Paper		Key to employability : CareerEDGE. Encompassing experience, knowledge, career development, generic skills, emotional intelligence reflection and evaluation, self-efficacy, esteem and confidence.	Yes (9,34)
McArdle et al	2007	Employability during Unemployment: Adaptability, Career Identity and Human and Social Capital	Empirical Research		The paper offered support for identity awareness, proactive personality, self-esteem and job search components	
Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden	2006	A Competence-based and Multidimensional Operationalization and Measurement of Employability	Empirical Research	Occupational Expertise, Anticipation and Optimisation; Personal Flexibility; Corporate Sense; and Balance explained a significant		

				amount of variation in objective and subjective measures of career success Present conceptualisation of employability			
Yorke	2006	Employability in Higher Education: What It Is, What It Is Not	Report	Graduate function within a job	Holds different meanings for different people and is multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning making employability design and development complex.	A set of achievements, skills, understanding and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation, which benefits themselves, the workforce, community and economy".	Yes (1-8, 52-53)
McQuaid and Lindsay	2005	The Concept of Employability	Literature Review			Skills, attributes, mobility, adaptability. Employability impacted by external factors, personal circumstances	
deGrip, Van loo and Sanders	2004	The Industry Employability Index: Taking Account of Supply and Demand Characteristics	Empirical Research			Capability and willingness on an individual level	
Brown, Hesketh and Williams	2003	Employability in a Knowledge driven Economy	Position Paper	Employability depends largely on the state of		Employability is about	Yes (15, 17-19)

				current labour markets, which can result in the chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment		Individual characteristics	
Forrier and Sels	2003	The Concept Employability: A Complex Mosaic	Position Paper	Within industry the notion of employability is perceived as complex and this is largely due to the rapidly changing labour market landscapes. Use of the employability process model: The employability process model maps out which factors affect an individual's chance of a job in the internal and external labour market and how these factors can interact			Yes (51)
Knight and Yorke	2003	Employability and Good Learning in Higher Education	Position Paper		Instruction, tasks and learning environments that call upon incremental self-theories, self-motivation, reflection and a range of social practices, amongst other things. Introducing the USEM model	Understanding skills. Effectiveness is related to mindfulness	
Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment (DHFETE)	2002	Report of the Taskforce on Employability and Long-term Unemployment	Report	Employability is the capability to move into and within labour markets and to realise potential through sustainable and accessible employment.		For the individual, employability depends on: the knowledge and skills they possess, and their attitudes; the way personal attributes are presented in the labour market; the environmental and social	Yes (16, 37-39)

						context within which work is sought; and the economic context within which work is sought	
Harvey, Locke and Morey	2002	Enhancing employability, recognising diversity: Making links between higher education and the world of work	Report	Meeting the needs of employers and making sure their employability is developed in line with these as part of their education	Graduate employability development opportunities as part of the curriculum within HE	Utilising subject knowledge, alongside a willingness to develop with consideration for external factors of influence	
Pierce	2002	Employability: higher education and careers services	Report		Graduates obtaining jobs (measurable to some extent through first destination surveys). Students being prepared for employment. Students gaining work experience (formal or informal, structured or not). Students becoming equipped with a defined range of skills		Yes (10-13)
Harvey	2001	Defining and Measuring Employability	Position Paper		Getting a graduate-level job. They may be referred to as `fulfilling work', or as a job that `requires graduate skills and abilities' or as a `career-oriented' job. Employability signalled by getting a job within a specified time after graduating. Demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment. `the degree is not the end of learning' showing recognition of the importance of `willingness to learn and continue learning'. Employability can be understood as the possession of basic `core- skills', or an		Yes (29, 41-48)

					extended set of generic attributes, or attributes that a type of employer (discipline-linked, sector-related, company-type) specifies		
Bowden et al	2000	Generic capabilities of ATN university graduates	Empirical Research		Graduate attributes are, 'the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and, consequently, shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as a citizen'. Employability is shaped at institution level based on graduate employability measurements		Yes (25-28)
Confederation of British Industry (CBI)	1999	Making Employability Work: An Agenda for Action	Report		The policies established by higher education institutions should drive the thought processes around employability for those in the education system. Policies that are created need to do in line with employer needs and demands		
Klutymans and Ott	1999	Management of Employability in the Netherlands	Position Paper			Applicable know how and skills and able to be mobile	
Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen	1998	Testing the validity and reliability of the perceived employability scale (PES) among a culturally diverse population	Empirical Research	Not enough jobs for everyone, which led to comments around the need for employability when there are few employment opportunities		Comments made around employability Is not needed to secure a job and that it is not the responsibility of the individual. Although some did recognise the	Yes (54, 59)

347

						need for employability and how it can be useful	
Hillage and Pollard	1998	Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis	Report		The propensity of many to simplistically identify employability as an institutional achievement rather than an individual achievement is problematic	Individual employability must meet the demands of industry	Yes (33)
Stephenson	1998	The concept of capability and its importance in higher education	Position Paper		Universities need to ensure that employability is more than just building upon skills and that there is a psychological component to employability	Employability is the process of a capable person working effectively on unfamiliar problems. There are also arguments about dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts can have its advantages also.	Yes (20-21)
Dearing	1997	Higher education in the learning society, Report of the National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education	Report		Employability is extremely important for HE, therefore universities must prepare students with skills for life.		Yes (22)
HM Treasury	1997	Productivity in the UK: the evidence and the Government's approach	Report	Employability is described as those who are capable of work and who can enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives		Individuals are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge and become adaptable	Yes (35)
Flanders	1995	The coming of the blue-collar graduate	Position Paper	Employability is about securing any job			Yes (40)

| Canadian Government Labour Force Development Board | 1994 | Putting the pieces together: towards a coherent transition system for Canada's labour force | Report | Obtaining employment that is meaningful to the individual could be seen as successful within the concept of employability | Yes (36) |

APPENDIX B:
Q METHODOLOGY - CONCOURSE

Authors	Year	Employability Definition	Q Sort Statements Number(s)
Trought	2012	Employability is preparing graduates for success.	24
Trought	2012	Employability is an individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job.	49
The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)	2011	Employability is important for the student more so than the higher education institute, but it also often viewed as nothing more than a tick box exercise.	50 and 57
Willetts	2010	Employability is the responsibility of higher education institutes and therefore important for the higher education institution but not the student.	23, 55 and 56
Alexandre, Portela and Sa	2009	Recruitment is a significant part of university survival and therefore some see employability as only a marketing tool for higher education.	58
Dacre-Pool and Sewell	2007	Employability encompasses the realisation of his/her potential in work and to achieve this self-awareness and reflection should be actively encouraged.	9 and 34
Yorke	2006	Employability is a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. As employability can hold different meanings for different people it could be considered multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning.	1-8, 52and 53
Brown, Hesketh and Williams	2003	Although employability is dependent on the state of the labour market in relation to the chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment, the individual characteristics of a person will also assist in the whether that employment is maintained.	15 and 17-19
Forrier and Sels	2003	Employability is complex and this is one aspect that is rarely contested.	51
Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment (DHFETE)	2002	Employability is using knowledge and skills possessed by an individual to show the capability to not only move but move self-sufficiently within the labour market. This may or not be achieved based upon the attitude and personal attributes of that individual.	16 and 37-39
Pierce	2002	Employability is becoming equipped with a defined range of skills to prepare for employment. Some of these skills may be acquired through gaining work experience in the hope this will assist in the chances of graduates obtaining jobs.	10-13
Harvey	2001	From a higher education perspective employability seems to indicate it is measured based on gaining a job within a specified time after graduating with some stipulation that this must be deemed a graduate level job. There is also a belief that employability is understanding that the degree is not the end of learning and recognising the importance of the want to continue to learn. There is also consideration for employability holding some individual aspects such as the ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment, developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes. All of this is well and good but there also has to be recognition for generic attributes that a type of employer specifies.	29 and 41-48
Bowden et al	2000	Employability is not only about preparing for ways in which people contribute to society as a citizen it is about using the expertise of those around when in an education setting. Higher education institutions know the qualities and skills required to build a bank of desirable graduate attributes, therefore the beliefs and knowledge of HEIs should prove pivotal in ensuring all students and graduates are successful.	25-28
Daniels, Andrea and Gaughen	1998	Dependent on the state of the labour market this could determine whether employability is even needed all the time. This also lends itself to questions such as is employability not my responsibility, particularly if there are external factors impacting on the likelihood of obtaining employment.	54 and 59
Hillage and Pollard	1998	The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers	33
Stephenson	1998	Employability could be seen 1 of 2 ways; the suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems or dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts.	20-21
Dearing	1997	The acquisition of skills for life is the foundation of employability.	22

HM Treasury	1997	Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives.	35
			40
Flanders	1995	Employability is securing any job as the aim for most people when discussing this topic, is to get a job.	
Canadian Government Labour Force Development Board	1994	Employability is not just about gaining employment, it is about gaining meaningful employment.	36

APPENDIX C:
Q METHODOLOGY – Q SET STATEMENTS

Q Set Statements

1 A set of achievements

2 Skills, understanding and personal attributes

3 Being successful within a chosen occupation

4 Benefiting the individual

5 Benefiting the workforce

6 Benefiting the community

7 Benefiting the economy

8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job

9 Self-awareness and reflection

10 Graduates obtaining jobs

11 Being prepared for employment

12 Gaining work experience

13 Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills

14 Gaining initial employment

15 Maintaining employment

16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market

17 About the individuals characteristics

18 Dependent on the state of the labour market

19 The chances of finding and maintaining different types of employment

20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively on unfamiliar problems

21 Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts

22 The acquisition of skills for life

23 The responsibility of higher education institutes
24 Preparing graduates for success

25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen

26 A set of graduate attributes

27 The beliefs of a higher education institute

28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher education institute believes will be developed during a student's time at the institute

29 More than the possession of generic skills

30 More than the requirements of employers

31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and self-manage the career building process

32 Knowledge and understanding of career management skills

33 The possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers

34 The realisation of his/her potential in work

35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are encouraged to develop skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives

36 Obtaining meaningful employment

37 The capability to move into and within labour markets

38 The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual

39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individual

40 Securing any job

41 Getting a graduate level job

42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating

43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point of recruitment

44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop attributes

45 The understanding that a degree is not the end for learning

46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and continue learning

47 The possession of basic core skills

48 A set of generic attributes that a type of employer specifies

49 An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job

50 A tick box exercise

51 Complex

52 Holds different meanings for different people

53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning

54 Not needed

55 Important for higher education institutes but not the student

56 Important for higher education institutes

57 Important for the student more so than the higher education institute

58 A marketing tool for higher education

59 Not my responsibility

APPENDIX D:
Q METHODOLOGY- EXAMPLE Q SORT (PQMETHOD)

```
31 35 41 2
 Enter the Statement Numbers, Separated by Spaces,
   for Column  5:
33 57 36
         -5    -4    -3    -2    -1     0     1     2     3     4     5
        !----!----!----!----!----!----!----!----!----!----!----!----!
        ! 14 ! 58 ! 49 ! 17 ! 48 ! 18 ! 10 ! 13 ! 52 ! 31 ! 33 !
        ! 54 !  1 ! 42 !  7 ! 21 !  4 ! 11 ! 51 ! 28 ! 35 ! 57 !
        ! 40 ! 25 ! 59 ! 31 ! 24 !  9 !  5 ! 53 ! 29 ! 41 ! 36 !
             ! 50 ! 55 ! 20 ! 27 ! 34 ! 47 ! 56 ! 30 !  2 !
                  !  6 ! 43 ! 12 ! 16 ! 15 ! 23 ! 22 !
                       ! 38 ! 22 ! 32 ! 45 ! 46 !
                            ! 26 !  3 ! 19 !
                                 ! 39 !
                                 !  8 !
```

APPENDIX E:
ETHICAL CLEARANCE

3rd July 2015

Susan Minten/Danielle Prescott
School of Sport, Tourism and the Outdoors
University of Central Lancashire

Dear Susan/Danielle,

Re: BAHSS Ethics Committee Application
Unique Reference Number: BAHSS 261

The BAHSS ethics committee has granted approval of your proposal application 'Perceptions and Engagement with Employability from the Perspective of undergraduate Sport Students'. Approval is granted up to the end of project date* or for 5 years from the date of this letter, whichever is the longer.

It is your responsibility to ensure that

- the project is carried out in line with the information provided in the forms you have submitted
- you regularly re-consider the ethical issues that may be raised in generating and analysing your data
- any proposed amendments/changes to the project are raised with, and approved, by Committee
- you notify roffice@uclan.ac.uk if the end date changes or the project does not start
- serious adverse events that occur from the project are reported to Committee
- a closure report is submitted to complete the ethics governance procedures (Existing paperwork can be used for this purposes e.g. funder's end of grant report; abstract for student award or NRES final report. If none of these are available use e-Ethics Closure Report Proforma).

Yours sincerely,

Peter Herissone-kelly
Chair
BAHSS Ethics Committee

APPENDIX F:
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Participant Information Sheet

About the Project

The aim of this research is to develop an understanding of the factors that impact on the engagement with employability from the perception of undergraduate sport students. In order to fulfil the aim of this research, it is important to explore and consider the various definitions of employability and how this can interact with the concept of student engagement.

Participant Request

As a participant there would be a requirement to take part in a task relating to Q Sorts of part of Q Methodology and 1:1 interviews. The Q sorts task would involve participants looking at various statements relating to employability and then arranging them in a particular order within a provided matrix. There may be occasions when this is audio recorded for accuracy and auditing purposes. There may also be occasions when verification is needed and therefore the research student may need to revisit the sample source to check authenticity. All active participants will be required to sign a consent form stating that any data provided will be anonymised and can be used for publishing.

How is the information used?

The information gathered will be anonymised and used to establish themes of collected data. Any data published will remain anonymised. The findings from this research will be used primarily for the successful completion of the research student's PhD submission, but may also be used for publishing in journals or books. Findings from this research will be circulated on an annual basis via email.

Data Stored

Only members of the research team will have access to the data collected. All data and information collected will be password protected and held on a secure network. Backup procedures are in place on external hard drives, again password protected.

Withdrawal Procedure

As a voluntary participant, you have the right to withdraw at any time during this study. In order to withdraw simply contact either the researcher or principal investigator by any means of communication you see fit. Please be aware that if you withdraw we still have permission to use the data collected prior to the withdrawal (as indicated in the consent form).

Contact Information

If you have any questions/queries or concerns please contact the research student directly:
Danielle Prescott
Email: dprescott@uclan.ac.uk
Telephone: 0161 295 2161

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and thank you for being part of this research.
Danielle Prescott (Research Student)

APPENDIX G:
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORMS - SAMPLE

CONSENT FORM

Title
Perceptions and Engagement with Employability from the view of Undergraduate Sport Students

For further information please contact:

Danielle Prescott
School of Sport, Tourism and The Outdoors
University of Central Lancashire
E-mail: dprescott@uclan.ac.uk
Tel: 0161 295 2161

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☑

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☑

3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☑

4. I agree to any data collection method being audio recorded ☑

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications ☑

6. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research. ☑

7. I understand that I am able to withdraw from this research at any time by contacting either the research student or principal investigator by any means of communication. ☑

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet (version 1, dated 29/04/15) for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions

Sam Foster	24.11.2015	S.foster.
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

D. Prescott		
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

If you have any concerns regarding any element of this research or your involvement within the research you can contact the Principal Investigator directly using the details below:

Dr Susan Minten
School of Sport, Tourism and The Outdoors
University of Central Lancashire
E-mail: sminten@uclan.ac.uk
Tel: 01772 894927

Page 1

364

CONSENT FORM

Title
Perceptions and Engagement with Employability from the view of Undergraduate Sport Students

For further information please contact:

Danielle Prescott
School of Sport, Tourism and The Outdoors
University of Central Lancashire
E-mail: dprescott@uclan.ac.uk
Tel: 0161 295 2161

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☑

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☑

3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☑

4. I agree to any data collection method being audio recorded ☑

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications ☑

6. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research. ☑

7. I understand that I am able to withdraw from this research at any time by contacting either the research student or principal investigator by any means of communication. ☑

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet (version 1, dated 29/04/15) for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions

Aaron Bryan   30/11/15   _Abb_
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

D. Prescott   ↳
Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

If you have any concerns regarding any element of this research or your involvement within the research you can contact the Principal Investigator directly using the details below:

Dr Susan Minten
School of Sport, Tourism and The Outdoors
University of Central Lancashire
E-mail: sminten@uclan.ac.uk
Tel: 01772 894927

CONSENT FORM

Title
Perceptions and Engagement with Employability from the view of Undergraduate Sport Students

For further information please contact:

Danielle Prescott
School of Sport, Tourism and The Outdoors
University of Central Lancashire
E-mail: dprescott@uclan.ac.uk
Tel: 0161 295 2161

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

4. I agree to any data collection method being audio recorded

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

6. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

7. I understand that I am able to withdraw from this research at any time by contacting either the research student or principal investigator by any means of communication.

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet (version 1, dated 29/04/15) for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions

Joe Haines	30.11.15	J. Haines
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

D. Prescott		
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

If you have any concerns regarding any element of this research or your involvement within the research you can contact the Principal Investigator directly using the details below:

Dr Susan Minten
School of Sport, Tourism and The Outdoors
University of Central Lancashire
E-mail: sminten@uclan.ac.uk
Tel: 01772 894927

APPENDIX H:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – STUDY 3

Semi Structured Interview Questions: Study 3

Q1. Can you talk about any recollections from employability related modules in year 1?

Q2. Did your views on employability change through your programme?
        If so, was there anything that stood out to alter your views?

Q3. General reflective comments on employability throughout your Higher Education journey?

Q4. Did you take any opportunities to develop your employability skills outside of your programme?

Q5. Tell me about your journey since graduating?
(Career/Education/Training)

Q6. According to the recent Q-Sort, you believe: (insert factor label) Do you agree with this? Does this describe you?

Q7. Would you say you were engaged or disengaged with the concept of employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with employability?

APPENDIX I:
PQMETHOD OUTPUT FILE- EXAMPLE

Correlation Matrix Between Sorts

SORTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1 staff1	100	48	44	60	52	27	34	55	42	47	57	36	39	54	58	43
2 staff2	48	100	65	31	30	0	40	53	56	27	55	45	23	32	36	56
3 staff3	44	65	100	27	15	11	31	65	39	26	41	38	15	21	22	49
4 staff4	60	31	27	100	35	13	22	45	44	50	60	5	45	51	57	30
5 staff5	52	30	15	35	100	35	39	36	36	24	42	12	37	36	56	30
6 staff6	27	0	11	13	35	100	13	17	20	12	16	2	32	16	13	7
7 staff7	34	40	31	22	39	13	100	50	42	31	51	27	25	37	39	35
8 staff8	55	53	65	45	36	17	50	100	51	38	59	16	27	33	50	50
9 staff9	42	56	39	44	36	20	42	51	100	35	57	24	37	30	36	44
10 staff10	47	27	26	50	24	12	31	38	35	100	37	11	46	45	50	33
11 staff11	57	55	41	60	42	16	51	59	57	37	100	33	35	52	54	55
12 staffa	36	45	38	5	12	2	27	16	24	11	33	100	-3	14	-6	31
13 staffb	39	23	15	45	37	32	25	27	37	46	35	-3	100	32	44	21
14 staffc	54	32	21	51	36	16	37	33	30	45	52	14	32	100	59	41
15 staffd	58	36	22	57	56	13	39	50	36	50	54	-6	44	59	100	39
16 staffe	43	56	49	30	30	7	35	50	44	33	55	31	21	41	39	100

Unrotated Factor Matrix

| | Factors | | | | | | | |
SORTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 staff1	0.7917	-0.0772	0.0323	0.1271	0.2896	-0.2441	-0.0182	-0.1970
2 staff2	0.6979	0.4790	-0.0336	-0.0752	-0.0116	0.0297	-0.1572	0.0942
3 staff3	0.6004	0.5271	0.0396	-0.3425	0.0449	-0.2662	0.1946	-0.0696
4 staff4	0.6889	-0.3232	-0.2798	-0.1212	0.1772	-0.0979	-0.2724	-0.2155
5 staff5	0.5993	-0.2951	0.3755	0.3272	-0.1938	-0.1124	-0.1815	-0.0430
6 staff6	0.2742	-0.3119	0.7843	-0.1300	0.1693	-0.1586	0.1638	0.1180
7 staff7	0.6060	0.1158	0.1475	0.2387	-0.4156	0.4402	0.3198	-0.1928
8 staff8	0.7535	0.1770	-0.0016	-0.2620	-0.2916	-0.2267	0.1636	-0.2099
9 staff9	0.6904	0.1216	0.1246	-0.2401	-0.1160	0.3148	-0.3488	0.0702
10 staff10	0.6050	-0.2674	-0.2770	-0.1809	0.2752	0.2683	0.3817	-0.0177
11 staff11	0.8112	0.0765	-0.0626	0.1134	-0.0690	0.0490	-0.2104	-0.0238
12 staffa	0.3483	0.6131	0.1790	0.3548	0.4769	0.1940	-0.0203	-0.1364
13 staffb	0.5352	-0.4590	0.1366	-0.3259	0.1539	0.3292	-0.0560	0.1114
14 staffc	0.6557	-0.2550	-0.2287	0.3614	0.1382	-0.0728	0.1812	0.2119
15 staffd	0.7252	-0.4022	-0.2093	0.1365	-0.2092	-0.1501	0.0134	0.0029
16 staffe	0.6664	0.2980	-0.0941	0.0471	-0.0700	-0.1018	0.0463	0.5662

| Eigenvalues | 6.6266 | 1.8411 | 1.1116 | 0.8902 | 0.8543 | 0.7480 | 0.6762 | 0.5983 |
| % expl.Var. | 41 | 12 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 |

Cumulative Communalities Matrix

| | Factors 1 Thru .... | | | | | | | |
SORTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 staff1	0.6268	0.6328	0.6338	0.6500	0.7338	0.7934	0.7937	0.8325
2 staff2	0.4871	0.7165	0.7177	0.7233	0.7234	0.7243	0.7490	0.7579
3 staff3	0.3604	0.6382	0.6398	0.7571	0.7591	0.8300	0.8679	0.8727
4 staff4	0.4746	0.5791	0.6574	0.6721	0.7035	0.7131	0.7872	0.8337
5 staff5	0.3591	0.4462	0.5872	0.6942	0.7318	0.7444	0.7774	0.7792
6 staff6	0.0752	0.1725	0.7875	0.8044	0.8331	0.8582	0.8851	0.8990
7 staff7	0.3672	0.3806	0.4024	0.4594	0.6321	0.7923	0.8946	0.9318
8 staff8	0.5678	0.5991	0.5991	0.6678	0.7528	0.8042	0.8309	0.8750
9 staff9	0.4766	0.4914	0.5069	0.5645	0.5780	0.6771	0.7988	0.8037
10 staff10	0.3660	0.4375	0.5142	0.5469	0.6226	0.6946	0.8403	0.8406
11 staff11	0.6580	0.6638	0.6677	0.6806	0.6854	0.6878	0.7321	0.7326
12 staffa	0.1213	0.4972	0.5292	0.6551	0.8826	0.9202	0.9206	0.9392
13 staffb	0.2864	0.4971	0.5158	0.6220	0.6457	0.7541	0.7572	0.7696
14 staffc	0.4299	0.4950	0.5473	0.6779	0.6970	0.7023	0.7351	0.7800
15 staffd	0.5259	0.6877	0.7315	0.7502	0.7939	0.8165	0.8166	0.8166
16 staffe	0.4441	0.5330	0.5418	0.5440	0.5489	0.5593	0.5614	0.8820

| cum% expl.Var. | 41 | 53 | 60 | 65 | 71 | 75 | 80 | 83 |

Factor Matrix with an X Indicating a Defining Sort

| | Loadings | | |
QSORT	1	2	3
1 staff1	0.5812X	0.4605	0.2898
2 staff2	0.2442	0.8112X	-0.0033
3 staff3	0.1158	0.7913X	0.0145
4 staff4	0.7876X	0.1767	0.0768
5 staff5	0.4055	0.2062	0.6166X
6 staff6	-0.0025	0.0236	0.8871X
7 staff7	0.2930	0.4965X	0.2646
8 staff8	0.4322	0.6234X	0.1539
9 staff9	0.3595	0.5535X	0.2671
10 staff10	0.6972X	0.1644	0.0338
11 staff11	0.5553	0.5792X	0.1547
12 staffa	-0.1720	0.7062X	0.0311
13 staffb	0.5605X	0.0169	0.4488
14 staffc	0.7035X	0.2116	0.0866
15 staffd	0.8231X	0.1481	0.1790
16 staffe	0.3484	0.6484	0.0018

| % expl.Var. | 25 | 24 | 11 |

Free Distribution Data Results

QSORT	MEAN	ST.DEV.
1 staff1	0.000	2.723
2 staff2	0.000	2.723
3 staff3	0.000	2.723
4 staff4	0.000	2.723
5 staff5	0.000	2.723
6 staff6	0.000	2.723
7 staff7	0.000	2.723
8 staff8	0.000	2.723
9 staff9	0.000	2.723
10 staff10	0.000	2.723
11 staff11	0.000	2.723
12 staffa	0.000	2.723
13 staffb	0.000	2.723
14 staffc	0.000	2.723
15 staffd	0.000	2.723
16 staffe	0.000	2.723

Factor Scores with Corresponding Ranks

No.	Statement	No.	Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3	
1	1 A set of achievements	1	-0.70	44	-0.72	49	-0.40	42
2	2 Skills, understanding and personal attributes	2	0.93	12	0.53	21	0.00	28
3	3 Being successful within a chosen occupation	3	0.30	24	-0.50	40	-0.24	33
4	4 Benefiting the individual	4	1.25	4	0.16	28	0.65	17
5	5 Benefiting the workforce	5	0.45	22	-1.16	51	-0.09	31
6	6 Benefiting the community	6	-0.72	45	-0.63	47	1.49	6
7	7 Benefiting the economy	7	0.22	27	-0.67	48	-0.09	31
8	8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job	8	0.92	13	-0.16	32	-0.66	45
9	9 Self-awareness and reflection	9	1.23	5	-0.74	50	0.82	16
10	10 Graduates obtaining jobs	10	-1.02	51	-0.51	42	-0.08	29
11	11 Being prepared for employment	11	0.29	25	0.22	27	0.25	22
12	12 Gaining work experience	12	-0.34	37	0.40	24	1.00	10
13	13 Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills	13	-0.01	31	1.03	11	0.43	19
14	14 Gaining initial employment	14	-0.57	43	-1.25	52	0.41	20
15	15 Maintaining employment	15	0.00	30	-0.36	35	1.33	7
16	16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the	16	1.17	7	0.27	25	-0.25	36
17	17 About the individuals characteristics	17	-0.06	33	0.56	19	-0.25	36
18	18 Dependent on the state of the labour market	18	-1.28	54	-0.07	29	-1.74	57
19	19 The chances of finding and maintaining different ty	19	0.81	18	-0.41	37	0.92	11
20	20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effec	20	0.94	11	-0.49	39	-1.25	52
21	21 Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts	21	-1.04	52	-1.25	53	-0.32	38
22	22 The acquisition of skills for life	22	1.12	8	0.65	17	2.06	2
23	23 The responsibility of higher education institutes	23	-0.22	35	-0.53	44	-1.64	56
24	24 Preparing graduates for success	24	0.89	15	-0.45	38	0.17	24
25	25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citize	25	0.87	16	-0.60	46	1.64	4
26	26 A set of graduate attributes	26	-0.89	49	-0.58	45	-1.00	49
27	27 The beliefs of a higher education institute	27	-1.07	53	-0.25	34	-1.23	51
28	28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher e	28	-0.74	47	1.48	3	-1.33	54
29	29 More than the possession of generic skills	29	0.35	23	0.56	18	0.82	16
30	30 More than the requirements of employers	30	-0.41	38	0.96	13	0.82	16
31	31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of wo	31	2.06	1	1.13	9	1.07	9
32	32 Knowledge and understanding of career management sk	32	0.90	14	0.48	23	-0.35	40
33	33 The possession by an individual of the qualities an	33	1.39	3	1.91	1	-0.76	47
34	34 The realisation of his/her potential in work	34	0.98	10	-0.21	33	-0.51	44
35	35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are en	35	1.65	2	1.43	4	-0.74	46
36	36 Obtaining meaningful employment	36	0.10	28	-0.36	36	-0.90	48
37	37 The capability to move into and within labour marke	37	1.02	9	0.49	22	0.90	12
38	38 The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual	38	0.57	20	0.80	14	0.51	18
39	39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individu	39	0.00	29	0.74	16	1.07	9
40	40 Securing any job	40	-0.94	50	-1.64	56	0.09	25
41	41 Getting a graduate level job	41	-0.18	34	-0.51	43	0.00	28
42	42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduat	42	-0.74	46	-1.59	55	0.84	13
43	43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the	43	0.47	21	0.56	20	-0.41	43

Factor Scores with Corresponding Ranks

No.	Statement	No.	Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3	
44	44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to dev	44	0.85	17	1.01	12	-1.17	50
45	45 The understanding that a degree is not the end for	45	0.80	19	1.29	7	1.98	3
46	46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn	46	1.20	6	1.11	10	-0.27	37
47	47 The possession of basic core skills	47	0.28	26	-0.09	30	0.00	28
48	48 A set of generic attributes that a type of employer	48	-0.45	41	-0.50	41	0.25	22
49	49 An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a	49	-0.44	40	0.24	26	-0.40	42
50	50 A tick box exercise	50	-1.93	57	-2.25	58	-1.82	58
51	51 Complex	51	-0.83	48	-0.10	31	2.06	2
52	52 Holds different meanings for different people	52	-0.03	32	1.17	8	-0.25	36
53	53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set me	53	-0.44	39	1.31	5	-0.33	39
54	54 Not needed	54	-2.31	59	-2.28	59	-1.98	59
55	55 Important for higher education institutes but not t	55	-1.89	56	-1.32	54	-1.39	55
56	56 Important for higher education institutes	56	-0.24	36	1.69	2	-1.31	53
57	57 Important for the student more so than the higher e	57	-0.51	42	1.31	6	1.57	5
58	58 A marketing tool for higher education	58	-1.79	55	0.77	15	0.17	24
59	59 Not my responsibility	59	-2.22	58	-2.11	57	-0.16	32

```
   Correlations Between Factor Scores
            1      2      3

   1    1.0000  0.5162  0.3018

   2    0.5162  1.0000  0.1828

   3    0.3018  0.1828  1.0000
```

Factor Scores -- For Factor   1

No.	Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
31	31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and	31	2.062
35	35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are encourag	35	1.646
33	33 The possession by an individual of the qualities and comp	33	1.389
4	4 Benefiting the individual	4	1.250
9	9 Self-awareness and reflection	9	1.230
46	46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and co	46	1.200
16	16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labou	16	1.175
22	22 The acquisition of skills for life	22	1.125
37	37 The capability to move into and within labour markets	37	1.017
34	34 The realisation of his/her potential in work	34	0.984
20	20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively	20	0.942
2	2 Skills, understanding and personal attributes	2	0.926
8	8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job	8	0.917
32	32 Knowledge and understanding of career management skills	32	0.896
24	24 Preparing graduates for success	24	0.887
25	25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	25	0.868
44	44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop a	44	0.854
19	19 The chances of finding and maintaining different types of	19	0.810
45	45 The understanding that a degree is not the end for learni	45	0.805
38	38 The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual	38	0.571
43	43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point	43	0.472
5	5 Benefiting the workforce	5	0.451
29	29 More than the possession of generic skills	29	0.350
3	3 Being successful within a chosen occupation	3	0.302
11	11 Being prepared for employment	11	0.288
47	47 The possession of basic core skills	47	0.282
7	7 Benefiting the economy	7	0.224
36	36 Obtaining meaningful employment	36	0.098
39	39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individual	39	0.004
15	15 Maintaining employment	15	-0.001
13	13 Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills	13	-0.007
52	52 Holds different meanings for different people	52	-0.033
17	17 About the individuals characteristics	17	-0.064
41	41 Getting a graduate level job	41	-0.178
23	23 The responsibility of higher education institutes	23	-0.218
56	56 Important for higher education institutes	56	-0.237
12	12 Gaining work experience	12	-0.340
30	30 More than the requirements of employers	30	-0.411
53	53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning	53	-0.436
49	49 An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job	49	-0.437
48	48 A set of generic attributes that a type of employer speci	48	-0.450
57	57 Important for the student more so than the higher educati	57	-0.505
14	14 Gaining initial employment	14	-0.573

Factor Scores -- For Factor   1

No.	Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
1	1 A set of achievements	1	-0.705
6	6 Benefiting the community	6	-0.722
42	42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating	42	-0.737
28	28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher educati	28	-0.741
51	51 Complex	51	-0.834
26	26 A set of graduate attributes	26	-0.894
40	40 Securing any job	40	-0.935
10	10 Graduates obtaining jobs	10	-1.024
21	21 Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts	21	-1.036
27	27 The beliefs of a higher education institute	27	-1.075
18	18 Dependent on the state of the labour market	18	-1.280
58	58 A marketing tool for higher education	58	-1.790
55	55 Important for higher education institutes but not the stu	55	-1.893
50	50 A tick box exercise	50	-1.934
59	59 Not my responsibility	59	-2.223
54	54 Not needed	54	-2.311

Factor Scores -- For Factor   2

No.	Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
33	33 The possession by an individual of the qualities and comp	33	1.914
56	56 Important for higher education institutes	56	1.689
28	28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher educati	28	1.482
35	35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are encourag	35	1.432
53	53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning	53	1.311
57	57 Important for the student more so than the higher educati	57	1.309
45	45 The understanding that a degree is not the end for learni	45	1.289
52	52 Holds different meanings for different people	52	1.173
31	31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and	31	1.126
46	46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and co	46	1.111
13	13 Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills	13	1.029
44	44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop a	44	1.007
30	30 More than the requirements of employers	30	0.956
38	38 The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual	38	0.800
58	58 A marketing tool for higher education	58	0.769
39	39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individual	39	0.744
22	22 The acquisition of skills for life	22	0.650
29	29 More than the possession of generic skills	29	0.561
17	17 About the individuals characteristics	17	0.558
43	43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point	43	0.555
2	2 Skills, understanding and personal attributes	2	0.531
37	37 The capability to move into and within labour markets	37	0.491
32	32 Knowledge and understanding of career management skills	32	0.481
12	12 Gaining work experience	12	0.405
16	16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labou	16	0.274
49	49 An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job	49	0.238
11	11 Being prepared for employment	11	0.215
4	4 Benefiting the individual	4	0.165
18	18 Dependent on the state of the labour market	18	-0.074
47	47 The possession of basic core skills	47	-0.093
51	51 Complex	51	-0.098
8	8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job	8	-0.162
34	34 The realisation of his/her potential in work	34	-0.212
27	27 The beliefs of a higher education institute	27	-0.252
15	15 Maintaining employment	15	-0.356
36	36 Obtaining meaningful employment	36	-0.364
19	19 The chances of finding and maintaining different types of	19	-0.406
24	24 Preparing graduates for success	24	-0.453
20	20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively	20	-0.487
3	3 Being successful within a chosen occupation	3	-0.498
48	48 A set of generic attributes that a type of employer speci	48	-0.503
10	10 Graduates obtaining jobs	10	-0.507
41	41 Getting a graduate level job	41	-0.512

Factor Scores -- For Factor   2

No.	Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
23	23 The responsibility of higher education institutes	23	-0.526
26	26 A set of graduate attributes	26	-0.575
25	25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	25	-0.595
6	6 Benefiting the community	6	-0.626
7	7 Benefiting the economy	7	-0.674
1	1 A set of achievements	1	-0.717
9	9 Self-awareness and reflection	9	-0.738
5	5 Benefiting the workforce	5	-1.159
14	14 Gaining initial employment	14	-1.246
21	21 Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts	21	-1.246
55	55 Important for higher education institutes but not the stu	55	-1.319
42	42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating	42	-1.591
40	40 Securing any job	40	-1.635
59	59 Not my responsibility	59	-2.114
50	50 A tick box exercise	50	-2.246
54	54 Not needed	54	-2.280

Factor Scores -- For Factor   3

No.	Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
22	22 The acquisition of skills for life	22	2.056
51	51 Complex	51	2.056
45	45 The understanding that a degree is not the end for learni	45	1.976
25	25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	25	1.644
57	57 Important for the student more so than the higher educati	57	1.565
6	6 Benefiting the community	6	1.486
15	15 Maintaining employment	15	1.327
31	31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and	31	1.075
39	39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individual	39	1.075
12	12 Gaining work experience	12	0.996
19	19 The chances of finding and maintaining different types of	19	0.916
37	37 The capability to move into and within labour markets	37	0.902
42	42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating	42	0.837
29	29 More than the possession of generic skills	29	0.822
30	30 More than the requirements of employers	30	0.822
9	9 Self-awareness and reflection	9	0.822
4	4 Benefiting the individual	4	0.649
38	38 The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual	38	0.505
13	13 Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills	13	0.426
14	14 Gaining initial employment	14	0.411
11	11 Being prepared for employment	11	0.253
48	48 A set of generic attributes that a type of employer speci	48	0.253
24	24 Preparing graduates for success	24	0.173
58	58 A marketing tool for higher education	58	0.173
40	40 Securing any job	40	0.094
41	41 Getting a graduate level job	41	0.000
47	47 The possession of basic core skills	47	0.000
2	2 Skills, understanding and personal attributes	2	0.000
10	10 Graduates obtaining jobs	10	-0.079
7	7 Benefiting the economy	7	-0.094
5	5 Benefiting the workforce	5	-0.094
59	59 Not my responsibility	59	-0.159
3	3 Being successful within a chosen occupation	3	-0.238
16	16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labou	16	-0.253
17	17 About the individuals characteristics	17	-0.253
52	52 Holds different meanings for different people	52	-0.253
46	46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and co	46	-0.267
21	21 Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts	21	-0.317
53	53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning	53	-0.332
32	32 Knowledge and understanding of career management skills	32	-0.347
1	1 A set of achievements	1	-0.396
49	49 An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job	49	-0.396
43	43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point	43	-0.411

Factor Scores -- For Factor   3

No.	Statement	No.	Z-SCORES
34	34 The realisation of his/her potential in work	34	-0.505
8	8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job	8	-0.664
35	35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are encourag	35	-0.743
33	33 The possession by an individual of the qualities and comp	33	-0.758
36	36 Obtaining meaningful employment	36	-0.902
26	26 A set of graduate attributes	26	-0.996
44	44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop a	44	-1.169
27	27 The beliefs of a higher education institute	27	-1.233
20	20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively	20	-1.248
56	56 Important for higher education institutes	56	-1.313
28	28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher educati	28	-1.327
55	55 Important for higher education institutes but not the stu	55	-1.392
23	23 The responsibility of higher education institutes	23	-1.644
18	18 Dependent on the state of the labour market	18	-1.739
50	50 A tick box exercise	50	-1.818
54	54 Not needed	54	-1.976

Descending Array of Differences Between Factors   1 and   2

No.	Statement	No.	Type 1	Type 2	Difference
9	9 Self-awareness and reflection	9	1.230	-0.738	1.968
5	5 Benefiting the workforce	5	0.451	-1.159	1.610
25	25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	25	0.868	-0.595	1.463
20	20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively	20	0.942	-0.487	1.429
24	24 Preparing graduates for success	24	0.887	-0.453	1.340
19	19 The chances of finding and maintaining different types of	19	0.810	-0.406	1.216
34	34 The realisation of his/her potential in work	34	0.984	-0.212	1.196

```
   4   4 Benefiting the individual                             4      1.250     0.165     1.085
   8   8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job       8      0.917    -0.162     1.079
  31  31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and  31   2.062     1.126     0.936
  16  16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labou  16   1.175     0.274     0.901
   7   7 Benefiting the economy                                7      0.224    -0.674     0.898
  42  42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating 42    -0.737    -1.591     0.853
   3   3 Being successful within a chosen occupation           3      0.302    -0.498     0.800
  40  40 Securing any job                                     40     -0.935    -1.635     0.700
  14  14 Gaining initial employment                           14     -0.573    -1.246     0.673
  37  37 The capability to move into and within labour markets 37     1.017     0.491     0.526
  22  22 The acquisition of skills for life                   22      1.125     0.650     0.475
  36  36 Obtaining meaningful employment                      36      0.098    -0.364     0.463
  32  32 Knowledge and understanding of career management skills 32   0.896     0.481     0.415
   2   2 Skills, understanding and personal attributes         2      0.926     0.531     0.395
  47  47 The possession of basic core skills                  47      0.282    -0.093     0.375
  15  15 Maintaining employment                               15     -0.001    -0.356     0.355
  41  41 Getting a graduate level job                         41     -0.178    -0.512     0.334
  50  50 A tick box exercise                                  50     -1.934    -2.246     0.312
  23  23 The responsibility of higher education institutes    23     -0.218    -0.526     0.308
  35  35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are encourag  35   1.646     1.432     0.213
  21  21 Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts  21     -1.036    -1.246     0.210
  46  46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and co  46   1.200     1.111     0.089
  11  11 Being prepared for employment                        11      0.288     0.215     0.073
  48  48 A set of generic attributes that a type of employer speci  48  -0.450    -0.503     0.053
   1   1 A set of achievements                                 1     -0.705    -0.717     0.013
  54  54 Not needed                                           54     -2.311    -2.280    -0.031
  43  43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point  43   0.472     0.555    -0.084
   6   6 Benefiting the community                              6     -0.722    -0.626    -0.096
  59  59 Not my responsibility                                59     -2.223    -2.114    -0.109
  44  44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop a  44   0.854     1.007    -0.154
  29  29 More than the possession of generic skills           29      0.350     0.561    -0.210
  38  38 The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual  38      0.571     0.800    -0.229
  26  26 A set of graduate attributes                         26     -0.894    -0.575    -0.318
  45  45 The understanding that a degree is not the end for learni  45   0.805     1.289    -0.484
  10  10 Graduates obtaining jobs                             10     -1.024    -0.507    -0.517
  33  33 The possession by an individual of the qualities and comp  33   1.389     1.914    -0.524
```

Descending Array of Differences Between Factors   1 and   2

No.	Statement	No.	Type 1	Type 2	Difference
55	55 Important for higher education institutes but not the stu	55	-1.893	-1.319	-0.574
17	17 About the individuals characteristics	17	-0.064	0.558	-0.622
49	49 An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job	49	-0.437	0.238	-0.675
51	51 Complex	51	-0.834	-0.098	-0.736
39	39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individual	39	0.004	0.744	-0.741
12	12 Gaining work experience	12	-0.340	0.405	-0.745
27	27 The beliefs of a higher education institute	27	-1.075	-0.252	-0.823
13	13 Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills	13	-0.007	1.029	-1.036
18	18 Dependent on the state of the labour market	18	-1.280	-0.074	-1.206
52	52 Holds different meanings for different people	52	-0.033	1.173	-1.206
30	30 More than the requirements of employers	30	-0.411	0.956	-1.366
53	53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning	53	-0.436	1.311	-1.747
57	57 Important for the student more so than the higher educati	57	-0.505	1.309	-1.814
56	56 Important for higher education institutes	56	-0.237	1.689	-1.926
28	28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher educati	28	-0.741	1.482	-2.223
58	58 A marketing tool for higher education	58	-1.790	0.769	-2.559

Descending Array of Differences Between Factors   1 and   3

No.	Statement	No.	Type 1	Type 3	Difference
35	35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are encourag	35	1.646	-0.743	2.389
20	20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively	20	0.942	-1.248	2.190
33	33 The possession by an individual of the qualities and comp	33	1.389	-0.758	2.147
44	44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop a	44	0.854	-1.169	2.023
8	8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job	8	0.917	-0.664	1.581
34	34 The realisation of his/her potential in work	34	0.984	-0.505	1.489
46	46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and co	46	1.200	-0.267	1.468
16	16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labou	16	1.175	-0.253	1.428
23	23 The responsibility of higher education institutes	23	-0.218	-1.644	1.426
32	32 Knowledge and understanding of career management skills	32	0.896	-0.347	1.243
56	56 Important for higher education institutes	56	-0.237	-1.313	1.075
36	36 Obtaining meaningful employment	36	0.098	-0.902	1.000
31	31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and	31	2.062	1.075	0.987
2	2 Skills, understanding and personal attributes	2	0.926	0.000	0.926
43	43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point	43	0.472	-0.411	0.883
24	24 Preparing graduates for success	24	0.887	0.173	0.714
4	4 Benefiting the individual	4	1.250	0.649	0.601

```
  28   28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher educati   28      -0.741     -1.327      0.587
   5    5 Benefiting the workforce                                     5       0.451     -0.094      0.545
   3    3 Being successful within a chosen occupation                  3       0.302     -0.238      0.540
  18   18 Dependent on the state of the labour market                 18      -1.280     -1.739      0.458
   9    9 Self-awareness and reflection                                9       1.230      0.822      0.408
   7    7 Benefiting the economy                                       7       0.224     -0.094      0.318
  47   47 The possession of basic core skills                        47       0.282      0.000      0.282
  52   52 Holds different meanings for different people              52      -0.033     -0.253      0.219
  17   17 About the individuals characteristics                      17      -0.064     -0.253      0.189
  27   27 The beliefs of a higher education institute                27      -1.075     -1.233      0.159
  37   37 The capability to move into and within labour markets      37       1.017      0.902      0.116
  26   26 A set of graduate attributes                               26      -0.894     -0.996      0.102
  38   38 The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual        38       0.571      0.505      0.066
  11   11 Being prepared for employment                              11       0.288      0.253      0.036
  49   49 An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job     49      -0.437     -0.396     -0.041
  53   53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning   53      -0.436     -0.332     -0.104
  19   19 The chances of finding and maintaining different types of  19       0.810      0.916     -0.106
  50   50 A tick box exercise                                        50      -1.934     -1.818     -0.116
  41   41 Getting a graduate level job                               41      -0.178      0.000     -0.178
   1    1 A set of achievements                                       1      -0.705     -0.396     -0.308
  54   54 Not needed                                                 54      -2.311     -1.976     -0.335
  13   13 Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills           13      -0.007      0.426     -0.433
  29   29 More than the possession of generic skills                 29       0.350      0.822     -0.472
  55   55 Important for higher education institutes but not the stu  55      -1.893     -1.392     -0.501
  48   48 A set of generic attributes that a type of employer speci  48      -0.450      0.253     -0.703
  21   21 Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts        21      -1.036     -0.317     -0.719
```

Descending Array of Differences Between Factors   1 and   3

```
 No.  Statement                                                    No.    Type   1 Type   3 Difference

  25   25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen     25       0.868      1.644     -0.776
  22   22 The acquisition of skills for life                       22       1.125      2.056     -0.931
  10   10 Graduates obtaining jobs                                 10      -1.024     -0.079     -0.945
  14   14 Gaining initial employment                               14      -0.573      0.411     -0.984
  40   40 Securing any job                                         40      -0.935      0.094     -1.029
  39   39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individual    39       0.004      1.075     -1.071
  45   45 The understanding that a degree is not the end for learni 45       0.805      1.976     -1.172
  30   30 More than the requirements of employers                  30      -0.411      0.822     -1.233
  15   15 Maintaining employment                                   15      -0.001      1.327     -1.329
  12   12 Gaining work experience                                  12      -0.340      0.996     -1.336
  42   42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating   42      -0.737      0.837     -1.574
  58   58 A marketing tool for higher education                    58      -1.790      0.173     -1.963
  59   59 Not my responsibility                                    59      -2.223     -0.159     -2.065
  57   57 Important for the student more so than the higher educati 57      -0.505      1.565     -2.070
   6    6 Benefiting the community                                  6      -0.722      1.486     -2.208
  51   51 Complex                                                  51      -0.834      2.056     -2.890
```

Descending Array of Differences Between Factors   2 and   3

```
 No.  Statement                                                    No.    Type   2 Type   3 Difference

  56   56 Important for higher education institutes                 56       1.689     -1.313      3.001
  28   28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher educati 28       1.482     -1.327      2.809
  33   33 The possession by an individual of the qualities and comp 33       1.914     -0.758      2.671
  44   44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop a 44       1.007     -1.169      2.176
  35   35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are encourag 35       1.432     -0.743      2.175
  18   18 Dependent on the state of the labour market              18      -0.074     -1.739      1.664
  53   53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning  53       1.311     -0.332      1.643
  52   52 Holds different meanings for different people             52       1.173     -0.253      1.425
  46   46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and co 46       1.111     -0.267      1.378
  23   23 The responsibility of higher education institutes        23      -0.526     -1.644      1.118
  27   27 The beliefs of a higher education institute              27      -0.252     -1.233      0.981
  43   43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point 43       0.555     -0.411      0.967
  32   32 Knowledge and understanding of career management skills   32       0.481     -0.347      0.828
  17   17 About the individuals characteristics                    17       0.558     -0.253      0.811
  20   20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively 20      -0.487     -1.248      0.761
  49   49 An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a job   49       0.238     -0.396      0.634
  13   13 Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills         13       1.029      0.426      0.603
  58   58 A marketing tool for higher education                    58       0.769      0.173      0.595
  36   36 Obtaining meaningful employment                          36      -0.364     -0.902      0.537
   2    2 Skills, understanding and personal attributes             2       0.531      0.000      0.531
  16   16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labou 16       0.274     -0.253      0.527
   8    8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job           8      -0.162     -0.664      0.502
  26   26 A set of graduate attributes                             26      -0.575     -0.996      0.420
  38   38 The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual      38       0.800      0.505      0.295
  34   34 The realisation of his/her potential in work             34      -0.212     -0.505      0.293
  30   30 More than the requirements of employers                  30       0.956      0.822      0.134
  55   55 Important for higher education institutes but not the stu 55      -1.319     -1.392      0.073
  31   31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and 31       1.126      1.075      0.051
  11   11 Being prepared for employment                            11       0.215      0.253     -0.037
  47   47 The possession of basic core skills                      47      -0.093      0.000     -0.093
  57   57 Important for the student more so than the higher educati 57       1.309      1.565     -0.257
   3    3 Being successful within a chosen occupation               3      -0.498     -0.238     -0.261
  29   29 More than the possession of generic skills               29       0.561      0.822     -0.262
  54   54 Not needed                                               54      -2.280     -1.976     -0.304
   1    1 A set of achievements                                     1      -0.717     -0.396     -0.321
  39   39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individual    39       0.744      1.075     -0.331
  37   37 The capability to move into and within labour markets    37       0.491      0.902     -0.410
  10   10 Graduates obtaining jobs                                 10      -0.507     -0.079     -0.428
  50   50 A tick box exercise                                      50      -2.246     -1.818     -0.428
   4    4 Benefiting the individual                                 4       0.165      0.649     -0.484
  41   41 Getting a graduate level job                             41      -0.512      0.000     -0.512
   7    7 Benefiting the economy                                    7      -0.674     -0.094     -0.580
  12   12 Gaining work experience                                  12       0.405      0.996     -0.591
```

376

Descending Array of Differences Between Factors   2 and   3

No.	Statement	No.	Type 2	Type 3	Difference
24	24 Preparing graduates for success	24	-0.453	0.173	-0.626
45	45 The understanding that a degree is not the end for learni	45	1.289	1.976	-0.688
48	48 A set of generic attributes that a type of employer speci	48	-0.503	0.253	-0.755
21	21 Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts	21	-1.246	-0.317	-0.929
5	5 Benefiting the workforce	5	-1.159	-0.094	-1.065
19	19 The chances of finding and maintaining different types of	19	-0.406	0.916	-1.322
22	22 The acquisition of skills for life	22	0.650	2.056	-1.406
9	9 Self-awareness and reflection	9	-0.738	0.822	-1.560
14	14 Gaining initial employment	14	-1.246	0.411	-1.657
15	15 Maintaining employment	15	-0.356	1.327	-1.683
40	40 Securing any job	40	-1.635	0.094	-1.729
59	59 Not my responsibility	59	-2.114	-0.159	-1.956
6	6 Benefiting the community	6	-0.626	1.486	-2.112
51	51 Complex	51	-0.098	2.056	-2.153
25	25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen	25	-0.595	1.644	-2.240
42	42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating	42	-1.591	0.837	-2.428

Exact Factor Scores (· la SPSS) in Z-Score and T-Score units

No.	Statement	No.	1		2		3	
1	1 A set of achievements	1	-0.61	44	-0.51	45	-0.66	43
2	2 Skills, understanding and personal attributes	2	0.82	58	0.70	57	-0.44	46
3	3 Being successful within a chosen occupation	3	0.70	57	-0.67	43	-0.80	42
4	4 Benefiting the individual	4	1.25	62	-0.20	48	0.88	59
5	5 Benefiting the workforce	5	0.93	59	-1.35	36	0.30	53
6	6 Benefiting the community	6	-0.99	40	-0.70	43	2.09	71
7	7 Benefiting the economy	7	0.42	54	-1.05	40	0.13	51
8	8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job	8	1.07	61	-0.40	46	-0.39	46
9	9 Self-awareness and reflection	9	1.17	61	-0.85	41	1.07	61
10	10 Graduates obtaining jobs	10	-0.94	41	-0.13	49	-0.45	45
11	11 Being prepared for employment	11	0.04	50	0.35	54	0.10	51
12	12 Gaining work experience	12	-0.90	41	0.41	54	0.96	60
13	13 Becoming equipped with a defined range of skills	13	-0.31	47	1.02	60	0.16	52
14	14 Gaining initial employment	14	-0.59	44	-1.35	36	0.85	59
15	15 Maintaining employment	15	-0.14	49	-0.30	47	0.72	57
16	16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the	16	1.73	67	-0.20	48	-0.74	43
17	17 About the individuals characteristics	17	-0.12	49	0.51	55	-0.15	49
18	18 Dependent on the state of the labour market	18	-1.41	36	0.74	57	-1.27	37
19	19 The chances of finding and maintaining different ty	19	0.61	56	-0.60	44	0.62	56
20	20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effec	20	1.30	63	-0.79	42	-1.29	37
21	21 Dealing with familiar problems in familiar contexts	21	-0.56	44	-1.03	40	-0.66	43
22	22 The acquisition of skills for life	22	0.84	58	0.37	54	2.20	72
23	23 The responsibility of higher education institutes	23	0.21	52	-0.11	49	-2.07	29
24	24 Preparing graduates for success	24	0.80	58	-0.86	41	-0.04	50
25	25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citize	25	0.79	58	-1.30	37	1.88	69
26	26 A set of graduate attributes	26	-0.45	45	-0.15	48	-0.55	44
27	27 The beliefs of a higher education institute	27	-0.62	44	-0.34	47	-0.43	46
28	28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher e	28	-0.97	40	1.95	70	-0.90	41
29	29 More than the possession of generic skills	29	0.05	51	0.50	55	0.83	58
30	30 More than the requirements of employers	30	-0.92	41	1.18	62	0.11	51
31	31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of wo	31	2.08	71	0.48	55	0.47	55
32	32 Knowledge and understanding of career management sk	32	0.96	60	0.04	50	-0.28	47
33	33 The possession by an individual of the qualities an	33	1.34	63	1.72	67	-0.81	42
34	34 The realisation of his/her potential in work	34	1.29	63	-0.60	44	-0.28	47
35	35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are en	35	1.60	66	1.01	60	-0.96	40
36	36 Obtaining meaningful employment	36	0.52	55	-0.15	49	-1.27	37
37	37 The capability to move into and within labour marke	37	1.13	61	-0.27	47	1.48	65
38	38 The knowledge and skills possessed by an individual	38	0.24	52	0.63	56	-0.02	50
39	39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individu	39	-0.42	46	0.84	58	1.03	60
40	40 Securing any job	40	-0.68	43	-1.79	32	0.65	57
41	41 Getting a graduate level job	41	0.02	50	-0.17	48	-0.20	48
42	42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduat	42	-0.51	45	-1.72	33	0.36	54
43	43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the	43	0.14	51	0.53	55	-0.69	43

Exact Factor Scores (· la SPSS) in Z-Score and T-Score units

No.	Statement	No.	1		2		3	
44	44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to dev	44	1.00	60	0.67	57	-0.79	42
45	45 The understanding that a degree is not the end for	45	0.09	51	1.03	60	1.73	67
46	46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn	46	0.98	60	0.91	59	-0.34	47
47	47 The possession of basic core skills	47	0.23	52	-0.21	48	-0.02	50
48	48 A set of generic attributes that a type of employer	48	-0.33	47	-0.51	45	-0.01	50
49	49 An individual who is suitably qualified to obtain a	49	-0.41	46	0.13	51	-0.68	43
50	50 A tick box exercise	50	-1.09	39	-1.83	32	-1.47	35
51	51 Complex	51	-1.41	36	0.39	54	2.35	73
52	52 Holds different meanings for different people	52	-0.31	47	1.47	65	0.03	50
53	53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set me	53	-0.48	45	1.55	65	-0.09	49
54	54 Not needed	54	-1.44	36	-1.83	32	-1.53	35
55	55 Important for higher education institutes but not t	55	-1.95	30	-0.57	44	-1.26	37
56	56 Important for higher education institutes	56	-0.37	46	1.89	69	-1.48	35
57	57 Important for the student more so than the higher e	57	-1.11	39	1.87	69	1.56	66
58	58 A marketing tool for higher education	58	-2.55	25	1.28	63	0.38	54
59	59 Not my responsibility	59	-1.75	32	-1.64	34	0.05	50

```
Distinguishing Statements for Factor  1

 (P < .05 ;  Asterisk (*) Indicates Significance at P < .01)

Both the Factor Q-Sort Value (Q-SV) and the Z-Score (Z-SCR) are Shown.

                                                         Factors

                                                    1            2            3
 No. Statement                                 No.  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR

  31 31 The ability to proactively navigate the world of work and 31    5  2.06    3  1.13    3  1.07
  16 16 The capability to move self-sufficiently within the labou 16    4  1.17*   1  0.27   -1 -0.25
  34 34 The realisation of his/her potential in work           34    3  0.98*   0 -0.21   -2 -0.51
  20 20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively 20    3  0.94*  -1 -0.49   -3 -1.25
   8 8 The capacity of a graduate to function in a job          8     2  0.92*   0 -0.16   -2 -0.66
  25 25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen    25    2  0.87   -2 -0.60    4  1.64
  39 39 The attitude and personal attributes of an individual   39    0  0.00*   2  0.74    3  1.07
  56 56 Important for higher education institutes               56   -1 -0.24*   5  1.69   -4 -1.31
  12 12 Gaining work experience                                 12   -1 -0.34*   1  0.40    3  1.00
  30 30 More than the requirements of employers                 30   -1 -0.41*   2  0.96    2  0.82
  57 57 Important for the student more so than the higher educati 57   -2 -0.51*   4  1.31    4  1.57
  14 14 Gaining initial employment                              14   -2 -0.57   -3 -1.25    1  0.41
  42 42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating  42   -2 -0.74*  -4 -1.59    2  0.84
  51 51 Complex                                                 51   -3 -0.83*   0 -0.10    5  2.06
  40 40 Securing any job                                        40   -3 -0.94   -4 -1.64    1  0.09
  58 58 A marketing tool for higher education                  58   -4 -1.79*   2  0.77    1  0.17


PQMethod2.35                Sta\ff
Path and Project Name: c:/pqmethod/projects/statemen


Distinguishing Statements for Factor  2

 (P < .05 ;  Asterisk (*) Indicates Significance at P < .01)

Both the Factor Q-Sort Value (Q-SV) and the Z-Score (Z-SCR) are Shown.

                                                         Factors

                                                    1            2            3
 No. Statement                                 No.  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR

  56 56 Important for higher education institutes               56   -1 -0.24    5  1.69*  -4 -1.31
  28 28 Qualities, skills and understanding that a higher educati 28   -2 -0.74    5  1.48*  -4 -1.33
  53 53 Multifaceted and therefore cannot be given a set meaning 53   -1 -0.44    4  1.31*  -1 -0.33
  52 52 Holds different meanings for different people           52    0 -0.03    3  1.17*  -1 -0.25
  17 17 About the individuals characteristics                  17    0 -0.06    1  0.56   -1 -0.25
  18 18 Dependent on the state of the labour market            18   -4 -1.28    0 -0.07*  -5 -1.74
  51 51 Complex                                                 51   -3 -0.83    0 -0.10*   5  2.06
  27 27 The beliefs of a higher education institute            27   -4 -1.07    0 -0.25   -3 -1.23
  19 19 The chances of finding and maintaining different types of 19    2  0.81   -1 -0.41*   3  0.92
  20 20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively 20    3  0.94   -1 -0.49   -3 -1.25
  25 25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen    25    2  0.87   -2 -0.60*   4  1.64
   9 9 Self-awareness and reflection                           9     4  1.23   -3 -0.74*   2  0.82
   5 5 Benefiting the workforce                                5     1  0.45   -3 -1.16*   0 -0.09
  14 14 Gaining initial employment                              14   -2 -0.57   -3 -1.25    1  0.41
  42 42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating  42   -2 -0.74   -4 -1.59*   2  0.84
  40 40 Securing any job                                        40   -3 -0.94   -4 -1.64    1  0.09


PQMethod2.35                Sta\ff
Path and Project Name: c:/pqmethod/projects/statemen


Distinguishing Statements for Factor  3

 (P < .05 ;  Asterisk (*) Indicates Significance at P < .01)

Both the Factor Q-Sort Value (Q-SV) and the Z-Score (Z-SCR) are Shown.

                                                         Factors

                                                    1            2            3
 No. Statement                                 No.  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR  Q-SV Z-SCR

  22 22 The acquisition of skills for life                     22    3  1.12    2  0.65    5  2.06
  51 51 Complex                                                 51   -3 -0.83    0 -0.10    5  2.06*
  25 25 Preparation for contributing to society as a citizen    25    2  0.87   -2 -0.60    4  1.64
   6 6 Benefiting the community                                6    -2 -0.72   -2 -0.63    4  1.49*
  15 15 Maintaining employment                                 15    0  0.00   -1 -0.36    4  1.33*
  42 42 Gaining a job within a specified time after graduating  42   -2 -0.74   -4 -1.59    2  0.84*
  14 14 Gaining initial employment                              14   -2 -0.57   -3 -1.25    1  0.41
  40 40 Securing any job                                        40   -3 -0.94   -4 -1.64    1  0.09*
  59 59 Not my responsibility                                  59   -5 -2.22   -5 -2.11    0 -0.16*
  46 46 Recognising the importance of willingness to learn and co 46    4  1.20    3  1.11   -1 -0.27*
  32 32 Knowledge and understanding of career management skills 32    2  0.90    1  0.48   -1 -0.35
  43 43 An ability to demonstrate desired attributes at the point 43    1  0.47    1  0.56   -2 -0.41
  35 35 Defined as those who are capable of work and are encourag 35    5  1.65    4  1.43   -2 -0.74*
  33 33 The possession by an individual of the qualities and comp 33    5  1.39    5  1.91   -2 -0.76*
  44 44 Developmental, indicating the likely ability to develop a 44    2  0.85    3  1.01   -3 -1.17*
  20 20 The suggestion that a capable person can work effectively 20    3  0.94   -1 -0.49   -3 -1.25
  56 56 Important for higher education institutes               56   -1 -0.24    5  1.69   -4 -1.31*
  23 23 The responsibility of higher education institutes      23   -1 -0.22   -2 -0.53   -4 -1.64*
```

378

APPENDIX J:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS – STUDY 3

Participant: 2sm-nw

KEY: P = Participant, R = Researcher

Participants will have both their Q-Sorts in front of them at the time of the interview:

Q1. Can you talk about any recollections from employability related modules in year 1?

P: Employability wasn't something I can remember being spoken about all that much. We would sometimes do things, that now looking back potentially enhanced employability but it was never explicitly explained that, that was the purpose. From what I remember I don't think my course had modules specifically focussed towards employability, it seemed to be developed in modules but as I said, not explicitly stated to students.

R: Do you feel this way of doing things altered how you engaged with employability?

P: For me personally, I would say no. I think I am quite aware of my own responsibilities, and I think this is even evident in the research I conducted with you at the beginning of my university studies. I can't speak on behalf of others but I do feel that for some students unless they are explicitly told, this is employability, then they would not recognise it, but also its difficult for universities because I have friends who were on some of the programmes that do have specific employability modules and they used to tell me that hardly anyone turned up for the class.

Q2. Did your views on employability change through your programme?
If so, was there anything that stood out to alter your views?

R: So just to expand on this question, please feel free to use both Q-Sorts to help answer this question if you feel it would be useful.

P: I do feel like some of my views have changed over time, but I am not sure if this is due to the university. I am someone who tries to get as much experience as possible, sometimes I have 3-4 different opportunities at any one time and I think my perception has altered through my experiences away from university. I feel like my understanding of what employers want, has developed by working across a few sectors, I'm not sure I ever got that complete message from the uni.

R: In relation to how this feeds into the Q-Sorts that you have presented in front of you, do you have any comments that could align what you've just said with what you can see in the Q-Sorts?

P: When I compare the Q-Sorts, I can see similarities that do make sense to me. The statements around personal development and individual capability for example are statements that I completely agree with and clearly did back then. I would probably say that my experiences have allowed me to see the role of industries more and how

380

this has impacted on me. The statement about moving within the labour market has been influenced by that.

R: In your original Q-Sort you were classified as belonging to Factor C, which has been labelled: Employability is focussed on personal awareness of individual capability, attitude, and the realisation of potential with the understanding that based upon this, employability can hold different meanings for everyone. Would you agree with this?

P: Absolutely, and although I would say I am more developed now, I still fundamentally believe that.

Q3. General reflective comments on employability throughout your Higher Education journey?

R: This question is very open and allows you to give some comments on employability during your entire UG journey with your university.

P: At the time of being a student I didn't realise this but since graduating and working across a few sectors, even in a voluntary capacity, I've noticed that my input with employability is something that has made me more aware and probably successful. I feel the role of my uni was quite limited and although there are different departments and careers services, my employability in my view enhanced when I took control. I kind of feel that uni's have specific information about employability and just deliver it to students, but I was never involved in any process at uni that allowed me be part of employability whilst being a student. This only happened during my experiences away from university when I began to develop my own personal skills through actively working. It would have been nice to have been asked about employability, and although you asked us in our first year and it was for your research, I was never asked again during my student journey.

R: In reflection to those comments you just made, if you had to recommend a change for universities going forward, is there anything you would say?

P: I would say involve your students more, at the end of the day this is their employability, their life, let them have some ownership.

Q4. Did you take any opportunities to develop your employability skills outside of your programme?

R: I do feel perhaps you have already answered this question, but is there anything you would like to add?

P: Not really, as I said I took on as many opportunities as I could and this was outside of uni. Although there were times when we were actively encouraged to take opportunities, whether this happened or not would not have mattered and therefore many students didn't, but I wasn't one of them.

R: Thank you, ok so now you've reflected on your journey as a student, we are now going to look at your current situation.

Q5. Tell me about your journey since graduating? (Career/Education/Training)

P: Since graduating I have moved into a few different roles, I've worked in marketing, worked as a coach, worked for a recruitment agency but the main aspect of my professional life is that I have returned to studying and am now doing another degree with a different university in a different subject.

R: That's interesting, what has made you study again?

P: From my experiences working I can see how markets change and I have recognised that there are some things I need to improve on and also become qualified in different areas. I feel from an employability perspective I have good awareness and this is obvious through my reasoning of returning to study, but I need a qualification in a different area as I have identified where I want to go in my career.

R: Do you feel your experiences with employability from being an UG the first time around will be useful in your current studies?

P: I do and although my first uni didn't do a bad job, I do think there is more that could be done to promote employability. For me, I am very proactive, so I just need to maintain what I have been doing throughout my entire time as a student.

R: Ok so considering we now know where you are at professionally, how you used to think as a UG student the first time round, lets look at what the analysis of the latest Q-Sort is saying about you.

Q6. According to the recent Q-Sort, you believe: Employability is individual awareness of personal skills and competencies that can benefit industry, but with the understanding that these skills are transferable and therefore allow for easier mobility across sectors. Do you agree with this? Does this describe you?

P: I would say this is fairly accurate about my employability beliefs. It is similar to my original views but with the added bit about employers which makes sense in relation to the experiences I have built up.

R: Are there any aspects of that label that you do not agree with?

P: No, I completely agree that this sums up my views on employability at this moment in time.

R: So considering all of the comments you have provided I am going to ask one final cluster of questions.

Q7. Would you say you were engaged or disengaged with the concept of employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with employability?

P: As a student I was engaged outside of university, but probably not within. My attendance wasn't great so I would appear to be a disengaged student, but I was doing more for my personal development in my own time and I saw this as productive. In terms of the delivery, I don't think there is a right way to deliver employability, but I think student engagement is important, so perhaps some industry speakers, personal skill development workshops would have been quite good and engaging. Overall my employability has been enhanced, but I do feel this is largely due to my own drive and determination, with a small steer from the uni.

Participant: 6cd-nw

KEY: P = Participant, R = Researcher

Participants will have both their Q-Sorts in front of them at the time of the interview:

Q1. Can you talk about any recollections from employability related modules in year 1?

P: I would probably say if I'm being honest that during my time at uni I was very much focussed on being a student and just did the modules I had and without any thought really. We did have modules throughout the course that had an employability aspect, think it was a professional development module that we did each year, but if I'm being truthful, at that time in my life, unless it had any relevance to assessment I wasn't interested.

R: Based on what you've said, is there anything that could have changed your engagement with modules like this.

P: For me it just felt like boring content, so maybe if there was a way to bring it to life through sport for example then it perhaps would of caught my attention. At that time, I was focussed on passing the assessments in the hope of getting my degree and then a job. Unfortunately, I wasn't thinking any deeper than that as a student.

Q2. Did at any point throughout your 3 years did your views on employability change during the programme?
   If so, was there anything that stood out to alter your views?

P: I think as I was getting closer to completing my degree I started to panic and think more about my future in relation to whether there was anything I could do better or differently but I wouldn't say anything changed during this time as a result of the uni, but I was becoming more aware just through the nature of time passing by, if that makes sense.

R: So just to expand on your comments, please feel free to use both Q-Sorts to help answer this question if you feel it would be useful. From your original Q-Sort the analysis concluded that you believed employability is obtaining and maintaining employment by possessing qualities and attributes that employers specify. Can you resonate with this from your 1st year of study?

P: I would say that is accurate from how I used to think. I still believe employers are a crucial part of what employability is but back then I thought they dictated everything. As I have said my level of thinking as a student was not particularly deep, so my mind was very much fixed on get a degree to get a job, which to me, meant that I needed to know what employers needed in order to reach that end goal. Looking back perhaps I was a little naïve but that is how I was as a student.

384

R: In relation to how this feeds into the Q-Sort you have now completed as a graduate do you have any comments around that?

P: I can see a shift in my thinking and as with the original I would say it does reflect my thoughts today. An obvious point of contrast is the use of the statement 'complex' in my original I just thought employability was straight forward and therefore the use of the statement 'complex' was irrelevant, whereas now and with what I know, employability is complex and is as far from straight froward as you can get.

R: So when comparing your Q-Sorts the analysis shows that previously you believed employability was an industry centred concept, where as your current Q-Sort shows that you have considered your own involvement and responsibility but with some consideration for Industry, would you agree with this?

P: Yes, I would say I agree with that. As I've developed and experienced more things I can see the value within me to make things happen. As a naïve student that I was, I shifted responsibility onto others in the hope it would help me, but I was so wrong.

Q3. General reflective comments on employability throughout your Higher Education journey?

R: This question is very open and allows you to give some comments on employability during your entire UG journey with your university.

P: Throughout my uni journey me and the other students always had opportunities to get experience with outside companies or clubs and I'll stupidly admit that I never took them. Looking back I wish I had. The way employability was taught, for me was boring and I didn't engage. We had some useful workshops closer to the end of our studies around CVs and interview prep, and I could see the value in that as we were at a point of needing those things away from uni, but all the other things I couldn't see the value because I didn't need it as the time.

R: In reflection to those comments you just made, if you had to recommend a change for universities going forward, is there anything you would say?

P: As I said before making it relevant to the subject I think would be a start, it would also allow me to recognise my own development if more explanation around employability practice was given.

Q4. Did you take any opportunities to develop your employability skills outside of your programme?

P: I didn't and this was something I hugely regret. I started to try and get some experience when it was probably too late.

R: Thank you, ok so now you've reflected on your journey as a student, we are now going to look at your current situation.

Q5. Tell me about your journey since graduating? (Career/Education/Training)

P: In terms of work I currently have 2 jobs, one in a supermarket and one in a bar. Neither are what I want to be doing and they don't have anything to do with my degree subject. I have applied for lots of jobs and get similar feedback, which is about my lack of experience, this is why I regret not taking those opportunities in uni.

R: Is there anything you are doing to try and bridge those gaps in the hope getting the type of career you want?

P: I am doing some voluntary work as a coach at weekends to try and build my experience, the fact it's voluntary isn't ideal but it has made me realise that is what I want to do as a career. I suppose in a way I am trying to make up for the opportunities I should of but never took in uni.

R: You mentioned about the uni perhaps making employability more subject specific, do you think if this had happened it would of altered your engagement and perhaps also triggered your interest in external opportunities.

P: Possibly, but whether I was smart enough to link employability and experiences together at that stage in my life is a question I can't answer. As a younger person I don't think I had the confidence or proactiveness to go out and do something outside my comfort zone, so if a more focussed approach to employability could of helped me with that, then perhaps this would have helped.

R: Ok so considering we now know where you are at professionally, how you used to think as a UG student the first time round, lets look at what the analysis of the latest Q-Sort is saying about you.

R: So considering all of the comments you have provided I am going to ask one final cluster of questions.

Q6. Would you say you were engaged or disengaged with the concept of employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with employability?

P: Completely disengaged as a student as I thought it wasn't something I needed to know about at that time. As mentioned before, if the delivery was different perhaps I would have engaged better as it would be delivered in a way I can relate to. I wish I had taken every opportunity, maybe even taken employability more seriously as this may have had some positive impact on me now.

Participant: 7cd-nw

KEY: P = Participant, R = Researcher

Participants will have both their Q-Sorts in front of them at the time of the interview:

Q1. Can you talk about any recollections from employability related modules in year 1?

> P: I remember the modules focused around personal development quite well as I actually liked them. I saw them as a break away from the content based modules and a way that seemed more focussed on me as a student. Some of the content wasn't the most thrilling but I could see the value in some but not all, this could be due to my age at the time.

> R: From what you've said I assume your engagement with the modules with an employability focus are ones you engaged with?

> P: I did engage with them, but I think as time passed assessment deadlines started coming thick and fast and my attendance started to drop for this module as I started to prioritise other ones that would assist with my assessment needs at that time.

> R: Is there anything that can have been changed to keep you engaged?

> P: I think if there was more explanation about why we did some of the things we did, that could help, but for those who are wanting a career at the end of a degree, interviews etc in year 1 felt too early. I now know looking back that's nonsense, but at the time, it just felt like something that wasn't needed right then.

Q2. At any point throughout your 3 years did your views on employability change during the programme?
If so, was there anything that stood out to alter your views?

> P: I think my awareness was ok in regard to employability but my faith in the university and my belief that they would steer me in the right direction was there. Not completely convinced that, that is what I should have done but I did and perhaps even allowed the uni to take more control than I should of. One thing I do remember quite vividly was during my 3 years I often got confused about employability as I was taught by tons of staff, and they all thought differently about employability, some would speak about employment, some would look at developing skills and some would have mock interviews. I was confused whether all of this was employability or not. This is why I just ran with what the uni provided me with and put my faith in them knowing what was best for me.

> R: So just to expand on your comments, please feel free to use both Q-Sorts to help answer this question if you feel it would be useful. From your original Q-Sort the analysis concluded that you believed Employability is not a one size fits all concept and

can be individualised based upon the required skills and attributes determined by HEI's Can you resonate with this from your 1st year of study?

P: I can see how my faith in the uni has translated across, I don't think that is how it should have been, but it was for me.

R: In relation to how this feeds into the Q-Sort you have now completed as a graduate do you have any comments around that?

P: Obviously as I am not in uni anymore I have looked at this slightly differently. I can see that unis may have a place in this but I think there are more important people (if that's how to phrase it) who should be ahead of unis, and that includes me. I don't think I gave myself enough credit or power over my own future, but I also don't think this was encouraged by my uni. As someone who believed the uni would steer me in the right direction, if they weren't encouraging me to be part of my own employability than I would have believed this is correct.

R: So when comparing your Q-Sorts the analysis shows that previously you believed employability was an individual and higher education centered concept, where as your current Q-Sort shows that you have considered your own involvement and responsibility but with some consideration for Industry, would you agree with this?

P: I would, and education does have a place but I don't want to put too much emphasis on that.

Q3. General reflective comments on employability throughout your Higher Education journey?

R: This question is very open and allows you to give some comments on employability during your entire UG journey with your university.

P: Personal development-based modules I engaged with to an extent, but I know I could have done more. I did have opportunities to do some work within a local council in the sport development department and I took this opportunity and I do believe it gave me additional skills so I am grateful for that.

R: In reflection to those comments you just made, if you had to recommend a change for universities going forward, is there anything you would say?

P: Being in control of my own future is something I wish I had been encouraged to do. Being part of my own personal development, I think could have highlighted how I am growing and hopefully this would be much easier to then translate into job applications etc.

Q4. Did you take any opportunities to develop your employability skills outside of your programme?

P: As just mentioned I did take one opportunity and perhaps I should have taken more, but I was also aware of limits and needed to make sure I didn't overload myself with uni work and opportunities.

R: Thank you, ok so now you've reflected on your journey as a student, we are now going to look at your current situation.

Q5. Tell me about your journey since graduating? (Career/Education/Training)

P: I currently work as a health trainer with my local authority. Not the job I imagined I would be doing but I do enjoy it and can see some progression opportunities for me which is good. I can see the value of some of the things I didn't realise at the time, for example I was asked to deliver a presentation at my interview and I was so nervous but I think the experiences I had at uni helped with this.

R: You mentioned about the uni giving you more ownership over your employability, how do you think this would help you in your role now if this had happened?

P: I think being able to see my own development and also being able to add input into what I feel I need to develop is important. I suppose maybe as an 18 year old you may not know what that is, but it would be nice to be asked and considered so that I also have some input.

R: So considering all of the comments you have provided I am going to ask one final cluster of questions.

Q6. Would you say you were engaged or disengaged with the concept of employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with employability?

P: I would say I was 50/50, could see the value sometimes but not always, engaged sometimes but not all the time. I thought the delivery was inconsistent, and this also depended on who was teaching us as this altered the messages coming across. I think I've said all I can.

Participant: 15c-nw

KEY: P = Participant, R = Researcher

Participants will have both their Q-Sorts in front of them at the time of the interview:

Q1. Can you talk about any recollections from employability related modules in year 1?

> P: It's all a blur really and for me my university experience was about having a good time and getting the best grades I could. I would certainly say that the only modules that stayed with me are the ones I really enjoyed like the practical coaching ones or the analysis ones, never anything employability specific.

> R: Do you remember anything at all about any modules that had an employability aspect to it?

> P: Vaguely, I'd always try and enhance myself with experiences but that was derived through me really. The uni was there to facilitate things but ultimately I found a lot of my own experiences and built what I felt I needed.

> R: Is there anything you would change from a university perspective that perhaps would make you remember employability-based modules?

> P: The only reason I don't remember specific modules is if they had no meaning to me or I just wasn't interested in them so although I have changed since then, I'm not someone who needs to be explicitly told, this is employability and this will make you better etc, for me the more subtle the better but if it's also thrown in with a module I enjoy then I would have appreciated it more I think.

Q2. At any point throughout your 3 years did your views on employability change during the programme?
If so, was there anything that stood out to alter your views?

> P: Probably towards the end of my degree things started to get a bit more panicky which made think about what I would be doing after uni, so I would say as I came closer to graduating, getting a job was certainly becoming more important.

> R: You mentioned you started to think more about employment as you got closer to graduating, did this impact on the way you thought about employability?

> P: Well yes, as I said, getting a job was getting closer so thinking about how I would do that and what I would need to do was also in my mind, but for me employability is still ultimately employment.

> R: So just to expand on your comments, please feel free to use both Q-Sorts to help answer this question if you feel it would be useful. From your original Q-Sort the analysis concluded that you believed Employability is not a one size fits all concept and

can be individualised based upon the required skills and attributes determined by HEI's. Can you resonate with this from your 1st year of study?

P: I can to a certain point and I'm actually surprised with that as that is probably the ideal way I would want to be perceived, when in reality as a student, I was very much a typical student, want to socialise, miss certain classes and enjoy my time.

R: Do you feel your views on employability have changed since you've graduated?

P: Absolutely and I can see how I feed into the process more, its very much driven by me because ultimately once I leave uni, if I want to keep being employed, well uni isn't there for me anymore, so being independent and taking charge is the thing that will allow me to continue forward in work.

R: So when comparing your Q-Sorts the analysis shows that previously you believed employability was an individual and higher education centered concept, where as your current Q-Sort shows that you have considered your own involvement and responsibility but with some consideration for Industry, would you agree with this?

P: Yes, without a doubt. As I said, uni is not part of my life anymore so I have to take ownership but also be aware of what my employer or future employer would want from me.

Q3. General reflective comments on employability throughout your Higher Education journey?

R: This question is very open and allows you to give some comments on employability during your entire UG journey with your university.

P: I didn't engage and that's just me being honest, any opportunities to better myself I set up on my own.

R: In reflection to those comments you just made, if you had to recommend a change for universities going forward, is there anything you would say?

P: Probably like the earlier point about working the subtleties into modules that students enjoy more as I also think this would make it easier on staff as some of the sessions, you could see where difficult for staff. Almost like pulling teeth at times.

Q4. Did you take any opportunities to develop your employability skills outside of your programme?

P: Only the ones I sought myself.

R: Can you tell me a little more about them, what they were, how you developed etc?

P: It was mainly coaching opportunities with companies who provided after school coaching in primary schools, it was paid which was good and I enjoyed it. Development wise, I would say I became more confident, I felt the knowledge from the coaching sessions at uni helped me a lot and it clarified that this is what I wanted as a career. I would often miss classes to do this role.

R: Thank you, ok so now you've reflected on your journey as a student, we are now going to look at your current situation.

Q5. Tell me about your journey since graduating? (Career/Education/Training)

P: I still work for one of the companies I worked for whilst at uni. I have a more senior role as I have been there a few years now, so my responsibilities have changed. I even go into the schools to try and pitch for the contract with the company and deliver in front of the entire school.

R: In your opinion, do you think you would be in this role without uni?

P: That's a tough question, I think having my degree has helped me secure a full time contract, I think my experience allowed me to get the foot in the door and I can see value in the content within the coaching modules that do still help me today.

R: Would you say any of those modules that referred to employability have helped you secure your role today?

P: Probably not, but that could be down to my lack of engagement as I'm sure other people would answer that question very differently.

Q6. Would you say you were engaged or disengaged with the concept of employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with employability?

P: Disengaged completely I would say. The delivery was an issue for me, I didn't find it interesting so I would either turn up and be passive or I wouldn't turn up at all. I think I have done what I needed to do for myself and therefore removed the role of anyone advising me on the things I should be doing.

Participant: 19c-nw

KEY: P = Participant, R = Researcher

Participants will have both their Q-Sorts in front of them at the time of the interview:

Q1. Can you talk about any recollections from employability related modules in year 1?

P: Coming to university in the hope of getting a job when I leave was my main aim as I'm sure it was for others, but as a 1st year I genuinely believed getting my degree would be enough, but I've since learnt how wrong I was. My experiences of anything employability wise in 1st year is non existent. I remember doing the task with you in year 1 and in all honesty, I do remember not knowing what half of the statements meant so my statement sorting was a bit of guess work, some things I did believe and others just random really. I didn't want to seem like I didn't know what was being asked of me.

R: Thank you for being honest and we will touch on the differences between the Q-Sorts soon enough.

R: Would you say you were engaged in the concept of employability within your 1st year of study at university?

P: Yes and no, I would say that I struggled to find the classes enjoyable which often meant I didn't care if I missed sessions, but then I did feel that sometimes I was missing out, I was seeing my classmates doing well and better than me in their assessments which didn't make me feel great. I just found the content boring and it seemed out of place with the course I was on as it was very rarely related to coaching or anything coaching like.

Q2. Did your views on employability change through your programme?
    If so, was there anything that stood out to alter your views?

R: So just to expand on this question, please feel free to use both Q-Sorts to help answer this question if you feel it would be useful.

P: My views probably did change and very slowly I would say, although there was something that altered how I thought about employability and where I was heading. During my 2nd year one of our tutors introduced us to a former student who came in to share their experiences and it was quite eye opening. He shared how he was a laid back student, getting drunk every night and not really taking things seriously, but over time this changed and he started to reflect on how he could achieve the career he wanted. He mentioned that when he was a student a tutor introduced him to the idea of Johari' window which allows someone to write a swot analysis on you, basically it's a way of showing what first impression you create of yourself and he said he was truly shocked and embarrassed by what came from it. That was the thing that made him realise he needed to make changes and only he could do that. I really enjoyed this

talk as it made me start to think of me and what I could be doing. This was a critical turning point I would say as I was hearing an experience from someone who had been in my position and not just the tutors speaking all the time.

R: That is interesting, can you think of some of the things you implemented after this talk?

P: I tried the Johari window thing and I too was surprised what came from it. One example I can give is that I always thought I was a confident person, but I was surprised to see that sometimes this was coming across as arrogance. When I think about how that could come across to an employer and potentially hamper my career progress, that was a real worry, so I would definitely say my awareness was heightened. I started to look for chances to become more confident but in the right way and this meant I started putting myself forward for more opportunities.

R: So considering all the comments you have just made, in your original Q-Sort you were classified as belonging to Factor C, which has been labelled: Employability is focussed on personal awareness of individual capability, attitude, and the realisation of potential with the understanding that based upon this, employability can hold different meanings for everyone. Would you agree with this?

P: I would agree with that statement now, but I am a little surprised that this was how I was portrayed in my first year at uni.

R: What makes you say that?

P: Just for the reasons I mentioned before, I feel like I messed around and didn't take things as seriously as I should of.

Q3. General reflective comments on employability throughout your Higher Education journey?

R: You may have already answered this in the last round of questions but this question is very open and allows you to give some comments on employability during your entire UG journey with your university.

P: I think I've already covered this probably in the explanation for the previous question.

R: In reflection to the comments you have made, if you had to recommend a change for universities going forward, is there anything you would say?

P: I can only speak for myself but there is a reason why I, and probably others find topics like this quite difficult to engage with, so my comments would be around

394

assessing how this could be improved to enhance the levels of engagement and I would like to think create better students as a result.

Q4. Did you take any opportunities to develop your employability skills outside of your programme?

P: I did eventually but I also wasted a lot of time quite early on. A few of my classmates started coaching for different companies so I managed to get onboard with some of those too, but as a student I was also in it for the money.

R: Do you feel these experiences outside university helped you in terms of where you are today?

P: I would say so, although the role I am in now is not my career choice I can definitely see how the skills I learnt during the experiences I gained as a student have been seen and valued by my now employer.

R: Can you elaborate on what some of those transferable skills are?

P: Probably communication skills, reliability, time management and customer service to an extent.

R: Thank you, ok so now you've reflected on your journey as a student, we are now going to look at your current situation which we have just briefly touched on anyway.

Q5. Tell me about your journey since graduating? (Career/Education/Training)

P: I haven't managed to get anything full time in coaching, which is what I want, so right now I am working for an insurance company, pretty much taking calls, dealing with customers etc.

R: You mentioned earlier how you can see the skills you developed as a student helped you acquire this role, can you see how your development in this role could assist you at securing the career you want in the future?

P: I can but I find that unless you are actively coaching it is very difficult to get others to see the transferability of those skills, it's sometimes been a barrier and one that I am worried about, as I don't want to get stuck in a job I don't want to be in long term.

R: Ok so considering we now know where you are at professionally, how you used to think as a UG student, lets look at what the analysis of the latest Q-Sort is saying about you.

Q6. According to the recent Q-Sort, you believe: Employability is individual awareness of personal skills and competencies that can benefit industry, but with the understanding that these skills are transferable and therefore allow for easier mobility across sectors. Do you agree with this? Does this describe you?

P: That pretty much sums up what I think, industry is important as knowing what they want from you is important and my involvement is even more important to make sure I can deliver on those needs.

R: Are there any aspects of that label that you do not agree with?

P: Probably not, but knowing what I know now, that label is more accurate for me as a graduate than it would have been for me as a student.

R: Could you expand on that point a little more?

P: So because I have worked and built up the experiences I have, I can see the value in employer requirements more because essentially without this I wouldn't know what I needed to develop to obtain a job.

R: So considering all of the comments you have provided I am going to ask one final cluster of questions.

Q7. Would you say you were engaged or disengaged with the concept of employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with employability?

P: My engagement was shocking until that point I mentioned in my 2nd year with the talk from the previous student. I was very much turn up, sit down and listen during the modules around professional development. The delivery was a turn off for me, it needed to be more coaching focussed or practical based and then my interest probably would have been piqued. My final comment would probably be, I wish I hadn't wasted so much of my time as a student and been more productive, but we live and learn I guess.

Participant: 22c-nw

KEY: P = Participant, R = Researcher

Participants will have both their Q-Sorts in front of them at the time of the interview:

Q1. Can you talk about any recollections from employability related modules in year 1?

> P: I came to university with the view of embracing everything I could. I enjoyed the personal development modules as this was the module that seemed different to all the rest. It was more focussed on us as students but with the view of preparing us for when we leave university, even from as early as the 1st year.

> R: Sounds like you may have already answered this but just for clarity would you say you were engaged in the concept of employability within your 1st year of study at university?

> P: Definitely and it baffles me that some weren't. I get that people value things in different ways but surely we come to uni to make the chances better of getting the career we actually want and for me this module was dedicated to that type of thing. Perhaps it was my attitude but because I recognised that developing my skills would position me better I took all the chances to practice those skills and try to make them better.

> R: How did you find the way in which it was delivered?

> P: I didn't find it a problem but I could also see that some of the tutors struggled because of the lack of engagement from some students, but then saying that some tutors managed to stretch the relevance of some of the content and made it more relatable to sport which I think was good and actually brought some of those who seemed disinterested back.

Q2. Did your views on employability change through your programme?
If so, was there anything that stood out to alter your views?

> R: So just to expand on this question, please feel free to use both Q-Sorts to help answer this question if you feel it would be useful.

> P: Not really, my views remained quite consistent throughout my studies and I think this was largely due to my attitude from day 1. I think because I chose to engage with the process this was a big factor. I would probably say something that did change over the 3 years was my level of self-awareness and my own ability to look for ways to develop myself.

> R: That is good insight, is there a reason why you looked to develop on your own? Did the university facilitate this in any way?

P: I felt like the uni could only do so much for me and something that I was noticing was that all the skills that needed developing within me and maybe other students seemed very instructional, for example we would be told, you need to develop your presentation skills because we know this is what you will need. This is a fair point but I already felt like I was quite good at presenting, so if I had been asked my opinion on my own development I would have said that I would prefer to be developing other skills that I am not so good at.

R: So, considering all the comments you have just made, in your original Q-Sort you were classified as belonging to Factor C, which has been labelled: Employability is focussed on personal awareness of individual capability, attitude, and the realisation of potential with the understanding that based upon this, employability can hold different meanings for everyone. Would you agree with this?

P: That I would say sounds just like me back then but also now in truth.

R: What makes you say that?

P: Because I am a crucial part of my own employability but unfortunately, I don't feel like this was considered. As a student I felt like I needed to take instruction and do what I was told.

R: Did you ever get asked for your input on your employability needs or views?

P: No, never.

Q3. General reflective comments on employability throughout your Higher Education journey?

R: You may have already answered this in the last round of questions but this question is very open and allows you to give some comments on employability during your entire UG journey with your university.

P: I think I've already covered this probably in the explanation for the previous question.

R: In reflection to the comments you have made, if you had to recommend a change for universities going forward, is there anything you would say?

P: Probably along the lines of what I just mentioned about actually involving us.

Q4. Did you take any opportunities to develop your employability skills outside of your programme?

P: I took as many opportunities as possible and at one point I had about 3 different voluntary roles at the same time, which all added some sort of value and gave me different experiences that I can still see the impact of those today.

R: You've just answered this I think, but for the purposes of consistency, do you feel these experiences outside university helped you in terms of where you are today?

P: I do and the skills I learnt and developed I can still see the impact in what I am doing currently.

R: Can you elaborate on what some of those transferable skills are?

P: I am more confident, I have no issues presenting to different audiences and a big part is just my self-assurance and knowing I am doing an ok job, that is a huge thing for me.

R: Thank you, ok so now you've reflected on your journey as a student, we are now going to look at your current situation which we have just briefly touched on anyway.

Q5. Tell me about your journey since graduating? (Career/Education/Training)

P: My journey has been similar to when I was a student, I have been involved in multiple roles but all those roles have helped secure my role now as an academy analyst with a football club, it took a while but I didn't expect it not to as I'm so grateful for the position I have been able to get.

R: Ok so considering we now know where you are at professionally, how you used to think as a UG student, lets look at what the analysis of the latest Q-Sort is saying about you.

Q6. According to the recent Q-Sort, you believe: Employability is individual awareness of personal skills and competencies that can benefit industry, but with the understanding that these skills are transferable and therefore allow for easier mobility across sectors. Do you agree with this? Does this describe you?

P: This for me is spot on and is quite similar in fairness to the original one I did in my 1st year, my beliefs have largely stayed the same.

R: Are there any aspects of that label that you do not agree with?

P: Not at all, I think it's a perfect description of how I now see employability.

R: So considering all of the comments you have provided I am going to ask one final cluster of questions.

Q7. Would you say you were engaged or disengaged with the concept of employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with employability?

P: My engagement levels couldn't have been any higher and I do feel like I reaped the rewards. The delivery on these modules was ok for me, I can see how others needed more entertainment if you will but for me it did the job. My main comment as mentioned earlier is to allow students more ownership and also accountability for their own employability.

Participant: 27st-nw

KEY: P = Participant, R = Researcher

Participants will have both their Q-Sorts in front of them at the time of the interview:

Q1. Can you talk about any recollections from employability related modules in year 1?

> P: I can't really remember, my university experience wasn't actually the greatest, I did as little as I could, and I admit that I needed to be a better student and I suppose I am seeing the results of that now. From an employability perspective I just remember there was a module but I rarely attended it.

> R: Based on what you've said, is there anything that could have changed your engagement with modules like this.

> P: No, I had a lot of personal issues at the time and perhaps should have withdrawn or suspended for some time, but I didn't and I just appeared to be a lazy student and did miss out on a lot.

Q2. Did at any point throughout your 3 years, your views on employability change during the programme?
If so, was there anything that stood out to alter your views?

> P: I was completely disengaged throughout the entire course and as I've said my motivation just wasn't there and therefore my lack of engagement was obvious and this was reflected in my grades unfortunately. My views didn't change, although I did start to panic more as I got closer to my course ending, but perhaps that's natural for everyone.

> R: So just to expand on your comments, please feel free to use both Q-Sorts to help answer this question if you feel it would be useful. From your original Q-Sort the analysis concluded that you believed employability is obtaining and maintaining employment by possessing qualities and attributes that employers specify. Can you resonate with this from your 1st year of study?

> P: I think that's accurate and I actually feel that way still today, I think employers drive what is needed and we must adhere to that in order to get a job and be successful.

> R: In relation to how this feeds into the Q-Sort you have now completed as a graduate do you have any comments around that?

> P: I think I am still confused by employability as for me it has always been about getting a job and nothing more, but when I see statements like the ones in this research it makes me think there is more to it than perhaps I realise.

R: So when comparing your Q-Sorts the analysis shows that previously you believed employability was an industry centred concept, you may have already covered this but has that perception changed or remained the same?

P: It has probably remained the same, I mean I have grown and got more experience which has altered my views on some things but I still believe employers and industries are at the centre of what employability is, in my opinion.

Q3. General reflective comments on employability throughout your Higher Education journey?

R: This question is very open and allows you to give some comments on employability during your entire UG journey with your university.

P: I feel like I have covered this already with the comments already made.

R: If you had to recommend a change for universities going forward, is there anything you would say?

P: I don't feel like I have the right to say anything in relation to change as I do realise that I needed to be a better student or at least speak up and share the issues I was having to try and get some help.

Q4. Did you take any opportunities to develop your employability skills outside of your programme?

P: I didn't and this was largely due to the lack of time I had with dealing with my personal problems.

R: Thank you, ok so now you've reflected on your journey as a student, we are now going to look at your current situation.

Q5. Tell me about your journey since graduating? (Career/Education/Training)

P: I am currently unemployed so my degree has not helped me so far but I am actively looking for work.

R: Are you looking for work that is relevant to your degree subject?

P: I think with funding cuts it has been really difficult to break into anything using my degree, I wanted to look into roles around sport development but councils are cutting costs all the time. I am reaching out to see if I can get onto a scheme that is being run by my local council, sort of like an apprenticeship to try and get people into work, but I am yet to hear anything.

R: So considering all of the comments you have provided I am going to ask one final cluster of questions.

Q6. Would you say you were engaged or disengaged with the concept of employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with employability?

P: Completely disengaged due to personal reasons. I can't comment on this due to my lack of engagement and low attendance, it would be unfair. I needed to be better as a student and if I had my time again, this would certainly be a lesson I would learn from.

Participant: 31ss-nw

KEY: P = Participant, R = Researcher

Participants will have both their Q-Sorts in front of them at the time of the interview:

Q1. Can you talk about any recollections from employability related modules in year 1?

P: I don't recall any modules specifically for personal development, I don't actually think there was any, but I do remember employability being spoken about a lot. In our module handbooks we had some employability markers that we had to achieve in all are other modules I think.

R: Can you comment on your own engagement with the aspects of employability within these modules?

P: I think because employability was in the background of the subjects we were learning, it is not something I actually thought about. I remember in some of the module handbooks it would say things like develop critical self-awareness and reflection, and then we would have an assessment that would be graded to see if this had been developed. So I can see where my employability was being enhanced but I wouldn't say at the time it was an obvious thing.

R: Is that a good or bad thing?

P: I think it was a good thing in terms of not potentially needing to engage with lots of extra things but maybe a bad thing in terms of 'ironically' not knowing or being aware of your own self development even though this is something that was being measured via assessments.

Q2. At any point throughout your 3 years did your views on employability change during the programme?
   If so, was there anything that stood out to alter your views?

P: My awareness of employability never really changed and I do think this is largely due to the fact we didn't even know this was going on behind the scenes. It would be interesting to know how things may be different if that awareness was there.

R: So just to expand on your comments, please feel free to use both Q-Sorts to help answer this question if you feel it would be useful. From your original Q-Sort the analysis concluded that you believed Employability is not a one size fits all concept and can be individualised based upon the required skills and attributes determined by HEI's Can you resonate with this from your 1st year of study?

P: That probably aligns to what I have just said about the university doing things behind the scenes and therefore universities taking a front seat with all things employability.

404

R: Is it a good thing for them to take the front seat?

P: When its put like that, probably not. I suppose it's my future so I should feature somewhere.

R: So when comparing your Q-Sorts the analysis shows that previously you believed employability was an individual and higher education centered concept, where as your current Q-Sort shows that you have considered your own involvement and responsibility but with some consideration for Industry, would you agree with this?

P: As I have graduated and worked and experienced new things, I would agree with this statement more so now, I don't think I would completely agree with this if these were the findings from my 1st year as my lack of experience impacted my perception.

Q3. General reflective comments on employability throughout your Higher Education journey?

R: This question is very open and allows you to give some comments on employability during your entire UG journey with your university.

P: As I said before, the fact employability was embedded meant that it was somewhat unseen so my comments around engagement really would be focussed towards my attendance across all my modules, which was generally good.

R: In reflection to those comments you just made, if you had to recommend a change for universities going forward, is there anything you would say?

P: I think perhaps providing more options for students in relation to embedded employability or modules that focus on it could be something.

Q4. Did you take any opportunities to develop your employability skills outside of your programme?

P: As a sports science student I was lucky and was able to go and get some opportunities working within professional sport settings. This developed me way beyond what I could from just the university. I just grew as a person and felt more prepared.

R: Thank you, ok so now you've reflected on your journey as a student, we are now going to look at your current situation.

Q5. Tell me about your journey since graduating? (Career/Education/Training)

P: Currently working as a general sports scientist for a rugby team and I love it, every day is different and from an employability perspective, each day brings new problems

but also force me to find solutions. It's a great experience and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

R: Is there anything the university could have done differently that you feel would benefit you in your current role?

P: Not really as the experiences I got within elite sport as a student did come from the uni so without that, I probably wouldn't be in the role I am today.

R: So considering all of the comments you have provided I am going to ask one final cluster of questions.

Q6. Would you say you were engaged or disengaged with the concept of employability as a UG student? Did the delivery of employability within your course affect engagement? Do you have any further comments to make generally about engagement with employability?

P: Unknowingly I would say I was engaged but as I was somewhat unaware it is difficult to comment on the delivery as it was all blended together. I think the points I've made earlier are only the same ones I would repeat now.