

## **Investigation into perceptions of gradueness of business and information systems undergraduates**

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### **Abstract**

This paper reports the results of an investigation looking at the gradueness of business and information systems graduates. It aims to validate the understanding of gradueness by students, lecturers and employers. In order to achieve this, it pays detailed attention to the pre-degree factors that influence undergraduate education, such as student background and assumptions; the process of education followed by students; and the skills and attributes that an undergraduate graduates with. In order to investigate these factors a primary research survey was conducted involving the collection of views of business and information systems students, lecturers and potential employers using questionnaires and interviews in the UK. The results reveal that there was a mismatch of views of students, lecturers and employers surrounding learning styles and the need for subject specific and general skills and attributes.

## 1) Introduction

In recent years, there have been many changes in society, economics, work and education. The education is believed to be playing a key role in work and economic well being of society. It is increasingly linked to particular types of employment and career paths. In many cases education is a means to 'breaking into' desired career paths, rather than, solely developing knowledge and wisdom (National Report, 2003a,b).

In recent years British governments and employers have expressed an 'interest' in standardising skills and attributes that undergraduates should have, across disciplines (UKCLE, 1997). Furthermore, the level of skills and attributes learnt can impact the quality of graduates generated (Quality Assurance Agency for HE, 2000). Ross (1996) found that there were three types of graduates – field specific, shared and generic. The graduateness of business and information systems (IS) undergraduates falls into the shared category due to the general nature of degrees in these areas.

This research involved investigation of the graduateness of business and IS graduates by considering views of students, lecturers and employers. It considered the pre-degree factors that influence education, such as student background and assumptions; the process of education followed by students; and, skills and attributes that a graduate leaves with. In order to investigate these factors a primary research survey was conducted involving the collection of views of business and IS students but also those of employers and lecturers. Overall the key research aims of this investigation were:

- To appreciate the scope of graduateness.
- To determine the skills and attributes with which a business and information systems graduate should graduate. To look at the skills and attributes from the teaching viewpoint of lecturers, the learning viewpoint of students, and, the recruitment viewpoint of employers.
- To determine the gap between the views on skills and attributes by the above three groups of stakeholders and make recommendations on closing this gap.

Many factors were considered in meeting these aims. These factors concerning graduateness were subdivided into three categories: graduate entry stage, education process (teaching and learning) and the characteristics and qualities of business and IS graduates. The researcher looked at the process of graduateness in three stages in order to pay holistic attention to it. The first stage is concerned with looking at the potential graduate

before s/he embarks on a degree programme. It considers aspects like the potential student background, learning styles, worldview, assumptions and motivation. The second stage is concerned with the process of education that a graduate has to follow. Here aspects like the degree orientation, degree type, mode of assessment, teaching and learning styles are considered. The learning type and quality of delivery is considered. The third stage is concerned with the impact of graduateness such as graduate ability, attributes and skills. New norms learnt and values adopted are also considered. Overall, as will become apparent from research results, a graduate is assessed by employers and society based on whether s/he can apply the new knowledge to the world (work and society) and are worthy of employment. Despite all these areas being relevant to the topic of this research *not* all areas will be discussed in detail. Similarly, despite considering all these factors in primary research only a few will be analysed and discussed in greater detail in the results analyses and discussion.

## **2) Literature search**

This section focuses on literature surrounding graduateness and looks at: potential students entering graduate study, the process of graduation, and graduateness. This way of undertaking the literature search was more logical in the researcher's view due to his systems thinking background (input, process and output). Some of the aspects involved will be discussed in more detail, depending on their relevance and the literature available on them.

### **2.1 Definitions of graduateness and graduate study**

HEQC (1995) launched a graduateness initiative. The Higher Education Quality Council's (HEQC's) definition of a graduate is: 'field specific (body of knowledge and other qualities relevant to the field), shared (attributes common to graduates from a family of degrees) and generic (attributes that apply to most degrees)'. Graduates are expected to possess skills as well as ancillary qualities (or attributes) such as the use of language, memory, general knowledge and familiarity with information technology (IT), etc. Hence the researcher learnt that a student has to develop general attributes and skills as well as subject specific skills. The former would be expected of any degree graduate, such as analytical and communication skills; whereas the latter are more subject and profession related skills such as accounting. In this research the respondents would be asked about general and subject specific attributes and skills. The skills and attributes that a graduate takes to an employer are important. The success of a graduate depends on achieving a suitable and

'remunerative' employment. The objective of meeting the skills and attribute needs of industry is also written about in the (UK) National Report (2003e).

HEQC's aimed to achieve a common standard of gradueness and publish a graduate standards programme across all disciplines (HEQC, 1997). Harvey and Knight (1996) provide definitions of academic standards that are based on knowledge and understanding as well as communication and other higher-level skills:

*"Academic standards measure ability to meet specified levels of academic attainment"*  
(1996:16).

They define the competence standard concerned with the graduate fulfilling a particular level of degree classification threshold as:

*"Standards of competence measure specified levels of ability on a range of competencies"*  
(1996:16).

They also define the service standards that are concerned with the benchmarking of specified minimum levels of service:

*"Service standards are measure devised to assess identified elements of the service or facilities provided by higher education institutions"* (1996:16).

The standard definition adopted by HEQC after its set-up in 1994 is:

*"explicit levels of academic attainment that are used to describe and measure academic requirements and achievements of individual students and groups of students"*  
(HEQC, 1997:11).

The UK Government commissioned Lord Dearing to carry out an assessment of HE (Jackson, 1998). He concluded that there was a need to shift emphases from maintaining quality to setting standards. He advised towards having more rigorous institutional inspections and stressed the need for institutions to be clearer about what they offered (Jackson, 1998). This resulted in the setting up of the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). This agency concentrated on graduation standards' outcomes. The QAA also proposed the setting up of subject groups and the benchmarking of subjects; initially it set up three pilot benchmarks in three areas (history, chemistry and law). The QAA also advised on the publications of the level of study needed by programme and subject. It defined the

expenditures for a particular level of attainment and standards used in assessing graduates, a clearer definition of 'graduateness'.

## **2.2 Background factors affecting the study of a student**

There are many background factors that affect the education of students. Some of these factors can be controlled by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) whereas others rest with the student. For example, The Committee of Scottish University Principles (CSUP, 1992: p60) provided the factors that affect the process of education. The key factors affecting the study are: (1) student intellect (Wechler, 1996; Sternberg, 1994:1; Gardner (1983); Atherton, 2001a:1; Forsyth and Furlong, 2000; ERIC, 2003); (2) background of potential students: culture (Atherton, 2001b:1); age (Connor et al., 1996); able/disabled (Watson, 1997); socio-economic status (The DES, 2003; Connor et al., 1996:96); ethnicity; gender (Connor et al., 1996:27); geographic and socio-economic (Forsyth and Furlong, 2000); (3) personal pre-entry motivation (Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981; Stipek, 1988; HEQC, 1996; Harvey and Knight, 1996).

## **2.3 The Process of education**

The process of education determines the skills and attributes of graduates. The length of study in the UK for business and IS degrees is three years in duration, or four if there is a placement. Despite the similarities in the subject area the content of the degree differs across universities, depending on the needs of the local industry and skills and interests of academic staff. This is why the QAA runs subject groups and benchmarks to achieve a common standard and consistency in degree programmes across the UK. For example, from researcher's experience business degrees in some universities have more information systems subjects than in others. Some business degrees place greater emphasis on marketing skills. On the other hand, the information systems in some universities involve more management of IS than the technical aspects, such as programming. Despite such differences the graduate still achieves a degree in business and information systems, although the skills set would differ depending on where the graduate studied.

There are also different ways of planning the teaching, as shown by Frudden and Stow (1985), who provide eight steps of planning sessions. A lecturer should also be aware of what the student is expected to achieve (Grunlund, 1993). Eisner (1997) writes that each session should have clear learning outcomes and some of these learning outcomes should also be linked to the process of learning. There are many writings on the process of learning that have helped the researcher to see different perspectives of learning from different

theoretical viewpoints. These are: (1) education process (learning and teaching) (Atkinson et al., 1993; Huitt (2001a:2; Atherton, 2001c:1); (2) learning vs memory (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968; Atherton, 2001d; Sieber, 2003; Science for all Americans online, 2003); (3) learning styles (Honey and Mumford, 1982; Kolb, 1984; Atherton, 2001e,f,g,h; Reynolds, 1965; Atherton, 2001f,g; Hudson, 1967); (4) principles of learning - learning can be focused upon by considering three different psychological approaches: cognition (Vygotsky, 1962); behaviourism (Skinner, 1953); and humanism (Maslow, 1954 and Sutich, 1961; Gogineni, 2000); (5) learning and teaching (National Report, 2003j; Huitt, 2003a:1; FEDA, 2003); (6) teacher expectations and values (The National Report, 2003a:2; Procter, 1984; Ashton, 1984; Huitt, 2003b:1; Huitt, 1997).

## **2.4 The Graduate?**

A student who graduates after following the process of education will have achieved a certain degree of understanding in the form of 'know-how', which is what Weber called "Gestalt" (Giddens, 1984). Thus they gain a certain amount of implicit and explicit knowledge (Boisot, 1999). By the time a graduate graduates s/he should, hopefully, have developed new norms and values that would allow them to work professionally with others. A graduate should have the ability to continue to learn and develop skills in their specific areas of work to succeed in the future. In fact this is the biggest requirement of employers (Harvey and Knight, 1996). According to Atherton as in Kolb, a student should be able to reflect on what they have done and whether they will have been able to do something better. They should be able to reflect and critically evaluate what they know and continue to learn (Schon, 1983). Atherton writes that being able to reflect on one's actions is an important part of professional development and is often a requirement of professional bodies. Students or graduates should also enter into 'double loop learning', as was advocated by Argyis and Schon (1978), where one reflects and evaluates one's performance and makes improvements to it.

One has to look at whether a graduate is able to use their new skills, learning and knowledge to work successfully and make their workplace more successful. For example, one has to look at whether they have gained analytical skills and intelligence to solve practical problems and have gained verbal ability and social competence to work well with others (Sternberg 1994). Hence in this research the employers will be asked to evaluate the professionalism and skills of the graduate recruits. Within their newly learned skills and attributes, they should be able to make a difference to practical situations, such as improving the running of their organisation and developing good working relationships with others. Gardner (1983/1999) writes that a graduate should show the following forms of intelligence: linguistic, logical-

mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist and existential/transpersonal.

The HEQC (1997) states that a graduate should have developed skills and abilities like: critical reasoning, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, identifying and solving problem. Therefore there have been attempts to define skills and attributes that are useful for graduates and are needed by employers.

Harvey and Knight (1996) write that 'bright' and 'brainy' graduates can bring lots of benefits to employers, which is why employers take 'risk' to recruit graduates. They believe that graduates are often paid more than non-graduate employees because they can add value to the organisation. According to National Report (2003f) the number of workers entering employment with qualifications has been increasing in the UK. The Institute for Employment Studies (Connor et al., 1996:7) shows a general increase in the number of graduates.

To employers there are benefits of recruiting graduates, such as: ambition, flexibility, logical thinking, analysis, creativity, innovation, ability to learn quickly and independently, well-developed communication skills, and specialist knowledge, as well as intelligence (National Report, 2003g). Harvey and Knight (1996) go onto highlight four key reasons for recruiting graduates:

- The knowledge and ideas graduates bring to an organization;
- Their willingness to learn and speed of learning;
- Their flexibility, adaptability and ability to deal with change;
- Their logical, analytic, critical, problem-solving and synthesising skills and the impact these have on innovation.

Thus, the higher a graduate climbs the enhancement continuum the better the evolution of the organisation. Harvey and Knight's employer satisfaction research corroborates that employers are looking for transformative potential from graduates. They also highlight six important graduate attributes: knowledge; willingness to learn; intellectual ability; ability to work in a modern organization; interpersonal skills; and communication. Although it is sometimes true that employers do not always know what they want from graduates.

Harvey and Knight (1996) found that the employers often assume that a degree brings with it a body of knowledge. But the types of qualities expected and the expectations of employers would depend on the context within which the employee would be operating. The

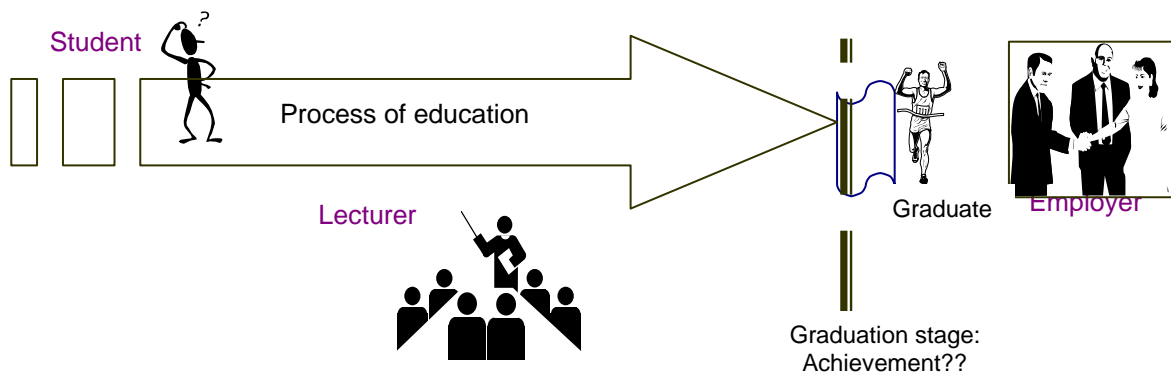
achievement of the degree, for employers, suggests that they have a willingness to learn. Harvey and Knight (1996:48) also write that:

*“Other organizations are much more interested in whether graduates can apply their basic theoretical or academic knowledge to ‘real-world’ situations (BT, 1993: 10)”.*

Harvey and Knight (1996) write that many employers want graduates in areas where understanding of core principles is more important than more subject knowledge. They highlight employers’ satisfaction and dissatisfaction with transferable skills of graduates and show the key employable attributes of graduates. Harvey and Knight provide a number of reasons why employers employ graduates, namely: knowledge, intellect and adaptability, ability to work in an organisation, interpersonal skills and communication. They write that employer satisfaction could depend on one or more of these factors.

### 3) Research strategy

This research involved three groups of stakeholders: students, employers and the lecturers, as shown in figure 1 below:



**Figure 1: Research scope**

Figure 1 shows the process followed by someone in becoming a graduate, where they follow a set of curriculum at their educational institution that leads to graduateness. After graduation they enter the world of work. This investigation involved quantitative and qualitative methods of research in following this journey. Initially, it involved a multiple-choice questionnaire that was quantitative in orientation and then the issues emerging from that were investigated further using in-depth interviews. The three groups of stakeholders were asked to explain their view of the skills and attributes that a class 2:1 (grade B) and above, business and information systems student, should possess. A list of skills and attributes was collected from them and a comparison was made between the three lists to see if there was a synergy between the views of the three types: students, lecturers and employers.

Secondly, interviews were used to elicit more in-depth feelings. The number of interviews were significantly lower than the number of questionnaires due to ‘logistics’, access and resources. However, the reason for using the interviews alongside questionnaires was to allow all three types of respondents to express their views subjectively. Since the questionnaires are very useful in eliciting various types of objective views and few subjective views, they do not allow the respondents to express their subjective feelings more freely. Therefore several semi-structured interviews were conducted following the questionnaire for more in-depth investigation. The researcher assisted the respondent to remain focused. Both methods used for data collection are further discussed next.

### 3.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used to obtain specific information about issues surrounding graduateness. In constructing the questionnaire a number of factors were considered: defining the aims of the survey/area of study; selecting the question styles and design; structuring the questionnaire; revising the questionnaire; and, administering the questionnaire. Multiple-choice questionnaire on issues of graduateness were administered to three groups of respondents, as shown in table 1 below:

<b>Respondent types</b> →	<b>Students</b>	<b>Lecturers</b>	<b>Employers</b>
Number of questionnaires	200	50	100
Number of responses	150	14	30
Number of institutions	3	3	100
Types of courses/jobs	Business and information systems (IS)	Business and information systems	Business and information systems

**Table 1: Research subjects**

The table shows that three lots of questionnaires were administered to collect the views of three types of respondents.

Firstly, 200 business and IS students were chosen from three HEIs mainly based in the north of England. 150 of the students replied, largely with help of lecturers known to the researcher. The geographical area was limited due to time and resources available to the researcher. Students from different stages of study were chosen to allow the researcher to reason as to what their understanding of graduateness is. Different types of questions (different orientation) were asked (as shown in appendix 1). For example, students were asked about the courses that they were

following, their understanding of the types of jobs, the degree programme being studies, whether the course was developing their appropriate skills, attributes, behaviour, beliefs and values. They were also asked about the course syllabus and the process of teaching. All three research HEIs attract students locally as well as from various parts of the UK and the world. They were asked about this since their experience would affect their response. It means that their response was most likely to be a fair representation of the views of students based in other parts of the UK.

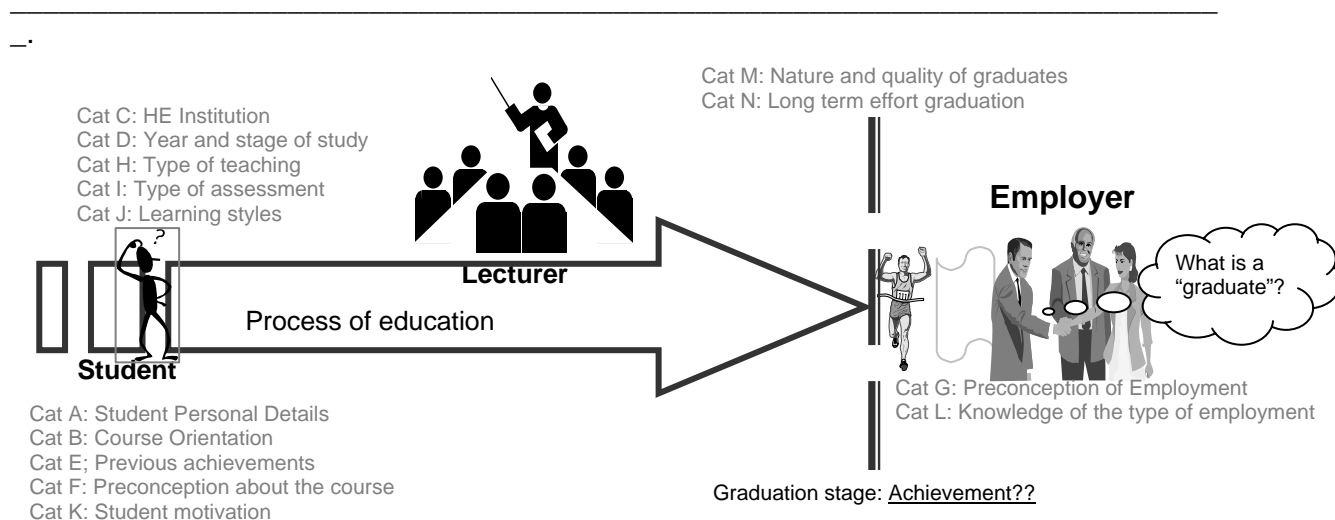
Secondly, about 50 lecturers were approached to fill in the multiple-choice questionnaire containing questions of the same orientation as the students but that differ from students (as shown in appendix 1). Only 14 lecturers replied in time, due to it being a busy teaching period (middle of semester 1). They were asked about their understanding of the types of jobs the students are likely to go into, how the curriculum and the teaching process was tuned to preparing the students for certain jobs, their understanding (through research, placements visits and other means) of the needs of the industry/employers of particular types of business and IS graduates. The lecturers were selected from three different HEIs, teaching different business and IS related modules, as well as having different levels of exposure to industry and employment needs. Many lecturers teach or visit or engage in research in other HEIs and they were asked about this, since their experience from other universities could affect their teaching. Also their response was most likely to be a fair representation of the views of the lecturers based in other parts of the UK.

Thirdly, 100 employers were sent a multiple-choice questionnaire containing questions of same orientation as students and lecturers but that differed from both (as shown in appendix 1). Employers were chosen from a cross section of industry from different parts of the UK to gain a more fair and representative view. The nature of questions were: the skills/attitudes/attributes, behaviour expected, professional work-related skills, personal qualities and types of future aspirations. Employers were chosen randomly, from careers advice centres of HEIs and from the UK business directories.

The questions in the questionnaires were categorised (using alphabetical letters). Each category represents a question orientation that was linked to literature. The orientations and their theoretical grounding are explained below:

- A. Student Personal Details
- B. Course Orientation
- C. HE Institution
- D. Stage of study
- E. Previous Achievement
- F. Preconception about the course
- G. Preconception of Employment
- H. Type of Teaching
- I. Type of Assessment
- J. Learning Styles
  
- K. Student motivation
- L. Knowledge of the type of employment
- M. Nature and quality of graduates
- N. Long term impact of graduation

The questions under each of these categories are provided in appendix 1. These categories helped to collect information on all aspects of graduation, as shown in figure 2:



**Figure 2: Categories of questions used in the questionnaire**

These categories were decided upon to explore the factors that affect graduateness of business and IS students in the UK.

### 3.1.1 Piloting the questionnaire

All questionnaires were piloted on a carefully selected sample of respondents. Firstly, the sample for the student questionnaire consisted of four students studying at various stages of their degrees, and one graduate. Minor alterations were made to the wording of some questions to increase clarity; for example, in finding out the socio-economic rating of their parents. Some comments were also made about the (long) length of the questionnaire. The researcher responded by taking out two questions and by changing the questionnaire layout. But there was little that the researcher could do without risking the loss of content. So the

overall length of the questionnaire was not changed much. Secondly, the lecturer questionnaire was piloted on three lecturers. One of the lecturers was a teaching and learning co-coordinator for a major business school. Necessary alterations were made to the phrasing of questions and any syntax errors were eliminated. Thirdly, the employer questionnaire was piloted on three graduate recruitment managers. A few minor alterations were made.

Overall the piloting was successful and relevant alterations, albeit small, were made to questionnaires. The pilot respondents complimented the questionnaire design and were pleased with the research topic. They saw this research as a good step towards improving the standard of IS education in British HEIs.

### **3.2 Interviews**

The interviews were used to investigate the emerging issues emerging from the questionnaires. The interview questions in this research were based on three issues that emerged from this research. These issues or themes were concerned with: a mismatch in the understanding of student learning styles, skills and attributes of graduates and the impact of graduation on graduates. As will be discussed in more detail shortly, the following interview questions were created to administer to students, lecturers and employers, based on the three issues that emerged from questionnaire analyses: students' learning styles, importance of attributes and skills, and, the impact of graduateness.

#### **3.2.1 Piloting of interview questions**

The interview questions were also piloted. Firstly, three students were selected to pilot interview questions for students. The pilot feedback resulted in a small alteration to questions. Secondly, the employer questionnaire was piloted on three employers resulting in a small change. Finally, three lecturers were chosen for piloting the lecturer questionnaire and no alterations were made to the questionnaire. Due to the in-depth nature of interview questions, their pilot took longer. Here the researcher took extra care in picking up any misunderstandings.

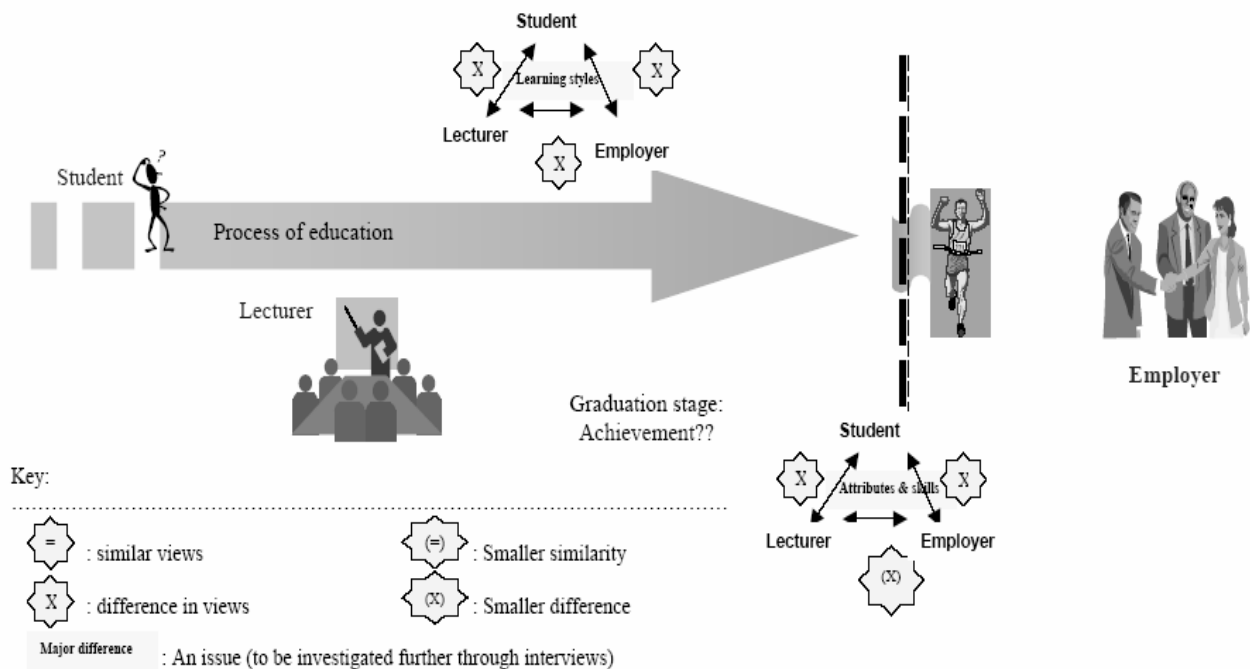
### **3.3 Data Analyses**

The questionnaires were analysed graphically, followed by relevant reasoning. Similarly the results of the interviews were analysed using a structured and systematic approach. The resulting findings were generated after: (i) comparing and creating relationships between the results from three sets of questionnaires to determine what makes a graduate, (ii) creating

relationship between different data sets, and, (iii) critically evaluating the results by reasoning. The results of the interviews are provided in a narrative form in order to highlight the in-depth issues.

#### 4) Results Analyses

This subsection provides some of the key findings from primary research. Two of the key findings show a mismatch between the perceptions of students, lecturers and employers about learning styles and skills and attributes, as shown in figure 3.



**Figure 3: Themes emerging from results**

Firstly, the results of the questionnaire show differences in the perceptions of the use and development of learning styles by students. The results show that students generally use one particular learning style and are often not willing to try others. It was found that students were often not reflective and do not think about their way of learning. Lecturers believed that different learning styles needed to be used and developed as their studies progress. Employers assumed that different styles had already been developed by students who used different ones. However, the interview results revealed that despite some students using different learning styles, most had one favourite learning style and tended to revert back to it even if they used another. Over half of the students interviewed confirmed that they used only one style that would allow them to complete their assessment quickly. They did not believe or understand the importance of investing time and effort in trying out different styles. Often students felt they did not have sufficient time to change as most also worked, and/or

had family commitments. Lecturers believed that some students were hesitant in trying out alternative learning styles.

However, students and lecturers agreed that change in learning styles is a slow process and that adoption of new styles can often be threatening for the student, as s/he may not feel confident enough to try new styles for learning. Often students believed that a change in learning styles should be facilitated more actively by lecturers. Lecturers felt they tried to do this through their teaching and assessment, and could not go too far, such as holding focus group discussions with students. The consequence of not developing, or using different learning styles would impact on student learning. It can affect their development of appropriate skills and attributes, hence their gradueness and attitudes towards work. Having different learning styles and being flexible with them gives an added advantage to students during their studies and even after graduation.

Secondly, the questionnaire survey revealed an inconsistency in the perceived understanding of skills and attributes by the three groups of stakeholders. Skills and attributes are crucial and need to be understood by students and lecturers (Harvey and Knight, 1996; Huitt, 2003). However, most student respondents believed that they did not need as many skills and attributes - subject specific or general. The employers saw the importance of general skills and attributes, those that students could use to become confident and to continue learning after graduation. Lecturers placed considerable importance on students acquiring as many skills and attributes as possible. The fact that many students did not fully appreciate the need to acquire the full set of skills and attributes is a concern as it could impact their gradueness.

Students were generally less aware of the necessary skills and attributes that they required and did not fully understand the ones needed to become good graduates. However, lecturers believed they instilled appropriate skills and attributes in students through teaching and assessment. But they, together with students stressed the need for relevant placement experience or industrial internship for students. Some lecturers thought that the development of skills and attributes depends on the motives and aspirations of students - whether they have short or long term aims that they wish to accomplish through following their course.

On the other hand, lecturers believed that students' long term planning and reflection would enable them to develop appropriate skills and attributes needed for graduation. Lecturers believed that a lack of understanding of skills and attributes was partly due to the large

diversity in employer expectations. Some lecturers believed that this was due to lack of intrinsic student motivation for studying to gain knowledge and wisdom.

### **5) Conclusion and summary**

In this research the researcher found that many students tended to use one predominant learning style and were hesitant in trying different ones. Further, interview-based investigations show that there was a lack of understanding, awareness and motivation of students to change and they often found their existing learning styles more comforting. They also often lacked the time and resources to undertake in-depth study that could help them to change. An increasing number of students have to work part time to maintain themselves or to pay their university fees. On the other hand, lecturers thought they were helping to change their learning styles or trying out new learning styles.

Secondly, students generally did not fully appreciate the number and quality of skills and attributes that they were supposed to develop during their study. Often they only selected a small number out of listed skills and attributes which they were supposed to gain on graduation. On the other hand, lecturers and most employers believed that students needed a lot more skills and attributes to become competent graduates. Furthermore, employers placed more emphasis on the importance of general personal skills and attributes than the subject specific ones. Students had a lack of understanding of skills and attributes they needed to develop. Another issue was that employers and students confirmed that business and IS students entered a diverse range of jobs, hence lecturers could not possibly be fully aware of what skills and attributes would help students the most.

So the issues that the researcher has examined will require greater motivation, flexibility by students; more meaningful communication by employers with lecturers (through HEIs) and students about their expectations. Lecturers too, need to be more flexible in their understanding of students' different learning styles and mind sets about the required skills and attributes. Perhaps there is a need for government to get more involved in setting standards for the undergraduate courses run by HEIs.

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**Questionnaire Questions**

Category	Orientation	Questions for Students/graduate	Questions for Lecturers	Questions for Employers
<b>A</b>	<b>Student Personal Details</b>	<p>What is your age group?            What is your gender group?            What is the professional socio-economic classification of your parents or yours if you have previous work experience?            What is your nationality?            Which part of the UK or other part of the world do you come from?            What is your family origin?            Health: Summarise the state of your health and physical ability? Please summarise (in confidence) any physical or other disability that affects your health and mobility.</p>	<p>What is the age groups of business and/or IS undergraduates do you normally teach?            In your opinion what is the socio-economic status of a majority of your business or IS students or their parents?            What are the typical nationalities of your students?            What is are the family ethnic origin of your students?            How easy is it for disabled students to learn business and IS “concepts”?            Does their home location have an impact on their views about graduateness in your view?            If you have International students do their perceptions differ from British students?</p>	<p>Which age groups of graduates do you normally recruit?            Does their socio-economic status have positive or negative implications at work?            Does their ethnicity have positive or negative implications at work?            Does their physical ability have positive or negative implications at work?            Does their nationality have positive or negative implications at work?            Does geographical background of graduates have positive or negative implications at work?</p>
<b>B</b>	<b>Course Orientation</b>	<p>What are or were you studying or have studied?            What is the orientation or path of the course?</p>	<p>What do you teach?            What is the orientation or the path of the course?</p>	<p>Which courses do you predominantly recruit from?</p>
<b>C</b>	<b>The HE Institution</b>	<p>Which HE institution are you studying in or did you study in?            What is or was the reputation of your HE institute?            Did the reputation of your HE institute influence your choice to come to it?            Which department are or were you in?</p>	<p>Which HE institution are you teaching in?            What is the reputation of your university?            Which department are you in?</p>	<p>Which HE institution do you normally recruit from?            Which departments do (most of) your new business and IS graduates work in?</p>

<b>D</b>	<b>Year or the stage of study</b>	Are you studying now or have you already graduated? Which year or stage programme are you in?	Do you teach business or IS courses? Which years or stages of the course do you teach on?	Do you recruit from placement students or graduates only?
<b>E</b>	<b>Previous Achievement</b>	What is the nature of your previous qualifications? How many AS levels did you achieve and at which grades? Which subjects areas did you study for your AS Levels? Have you done access or mature students course leading to business and/or information systems degree course? What was your overall level of NVQ/BTEC achievement?	Do you believe that students with vocational background, such as NVQ students make better business or IS students and eventually graduates? Do you believe that students with non-vocational background, such as A levels students make better business or IS students and eventually graduates?	Do you believe that students with vocational background, such as NVQ students make better business or IS graduates? Do you believe that students with non-vocational background, such as A levels students make better business or IS graduates?
<b>F</b>	<b>Preconception about the course</b>	What were your preconceptions about the course before coming to the HE institution and how have these changed since? What were your preconceptions about the HE institution before coming to it and how has this changed since? What were your preconceptions about other students before coming to the university? Has this influenced your learning?	What should be the ideal preconceptions of a student before they enter the HE Institution? Should the society and/schools shape the preconceptions of students?	Should the school/society condition the student to be more realistic about education and be work oriented? Is it viable or even suitable for students to hold certain preconceptions about the work place?

... continuation ...

Category	Orientation	Questions for Students	Questions for Lecturers	Questions for Employers
G	Pre-conception of Employment	What were your preconceptions about the type of employment that you may get before coming to the university? If you are a graduate then what type of employment did you enter after graduation?	Are you <i>very</i> clear about the types of employment that your student is likely to enter? Do you <i>always</i> keep the potential student employment in mind when teaching?	Is it necessary that the students to be aware of the type of employment they want to enter? Is it necessary for lecturers to know the type of employment the student is likely to enter?
H	Type of Teaching	Which methods of teaching are used on your course to which you have been exposed (to so far) or were used when you were a student? Also how effective is this teaching in developing your skills and attributes overall?	Which methods of teaching do you use in teaching? Also how effective is your teaching, in your view, in developing student skills and attributes overall?	Do you believe that teaching can shape the skills and attributes of the student? Can good teaching by the HE institution and good learning by the student shape the skills and attributes of the student?
I	Type of Assessment	Which type of assessment is used on your course to which you have been exposed (to so far) or were used when you were a student? Also how effective is or was this assessment in developing your skills + attributes?	Which of the following type of assessment do you use in your teaching? Also how effective is this assessment in developing student skills and attributes overall?	Do you believe that assessment can shape the skills and attributes of the student?
J	Learning Styles	What was your learning style before this course and which new ones have you developed? Are your styles consistent with the needs of your course? How effective is your learning style, in your opinion?	Which two learning styles are most important for a business and IS student?	Which two learning styles do you value the most from business and IS students?
K	Student motivation	What were or are your reasons for studying?	What should be the reasons for a student for studying?	What are the reasons, in your view, for students to study and become

		What is or was your key motivation for studying?		graduates?
<b>L</b>	<b>Knowledge of the type of employment</b>	Do or did the teaching staff at your HE institution know your key motivation for studying? Do or did the teaching staff at your HE institution know the typical job(s) that you are likely to enter into, and how do they show that they understand? Do you feel that you are/were prepared well for suitable or relevant work?	Do you know the key motivations of students for studying? Do you know the typical job(s) employment that your students are likely to enter ? Are you preparing students for work adequately?	Should the student and/or teaching staff know what sort of employment the graduate is likely to enter? What effort do you as employer make to make the HE institutions aware of your graduate needs?
<b>M</b>	<b>Nature and quality of graduates</b>	What attributes, in your view, are you developing or have developed during your course? What skills, in your view, are you developing or have developed during your course? Does or did your course involve a short or long placement?	What attributes, in your view, should a student develop? What skills, in your view, should a student develop? Does a placement affect graduateness of a graduate?	What attributes, in your view, should a student develop? What skills, in your view, should a student develop? Does a placement affect graduateness of a graduate?
<b>N</b>	<b>Long term effort graduation</b>	Does becoming a graduate mean a change in personality and a way of working? Does becoming a graduate mean it affects the view about work and the seriousness to work? Does becoming a graduate affects the work performance? Does becoming a graduate mean it increase the professionalism in the worker/graduate?	Does becoming a graduate mean a change in personality and a way of working? Does becoming a graduate mean it affects the view about work and the seriousness to work? Does becoming a graduate mean it affects the work performance? Does becoming a graduate mean it increase the professionalism in the worker/graduate?	Does becoming a graduate mean a change in personality and a way of working? Does becoming a graduate mean it affects the view about work and the seriousness to work? Does becoming a graduate mean it affects the work performance? Does becoming a graduate mean it increase the professionalism in the worker/graduate?