



Anglia Ruskin
University

Cambridge Chelmsford Peterborough

Report: The Long Term Impact of Cambridge Hub



Introduction

This report is an analysis of the long-term impact of the Cambridge Hub. The Hub aims to encourage and develop a future generation of social and environmental leaders while they are at university; this analysis explores the lasting effect of this work, by examining the significance of the role the Hub plays in enabling these people to make a difference once they have graduated.

The report which follows evaluates the success of the Hub against this aim, utilising information obtained from the Hub but mostly through consultation with the alumni both through telephone interviews and an online survey.

Section 1 provides some background information about Student Hubs and Cambridge Hub in particular. This is followed by a brief outline of the methodology used for this analysis in Section 2, before presenting the findings from the analysis in Section 3.

This report was commissioned in 2015 by Cambridge Hub in collaboration with Social Incubator East, and written by Elaine McCorrison from 3rd Sector Futures¹ at Anglia Ruskin University.

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We would like to thank Anna Malan for her support in the writing of this report and all the alumni that participated in the consultation.

Section One: Cambridge Hub

1.1 Student Hubs

The Student Hub movement was launched in Oxford in 2007 by a group of students who just wanted to make the world a better place. One key role of the first hub was to make the student social action societies of Oxford University more effective and collaborative. The immense success of the original Hub led to the creation of Student Hubs, a national charity, which included Cambridge Hub, in 2008. There are now Hubs at 10 locations around the UK.

¹ a specialist unit working with charities and social enterprises, based in the Lord Ashcroft International Business School at Anglia Ruskin University

The Student Hub² movement believes that every student should participate in social action, positively impacting on their community at university and beyond, and that social action has the potential to benefit three groups in the following ways:

Students : gain skills (including project management, leadership and time management), frontline experience tackling social and environmental issues, and professional experience working on projects or in social impact organisations.

Communities: are able to engage with young people that have the time, energy and skills to have a positive impact on the social challenges we all face.

Universities: benefit from an enhanced student experience, strengthened community relations, and more employable graduates who are more likely to give back to their educational institution in the future.



Figure 1: Student Hub –theory of change

1.2 Cambridge Hub

Cambridge Hub is the second oldest Hub in the UK. As with the original Hub in Oxford, the vision was of a network that would connect students working across different causes so they could share insight, knowledge, and experience, thereby making all groups more effective. As more and more groups expressed interest in becoming involved, it became evident that there were many other ways in which student charitable groups could be having a bigger impact.

Today Cambridge Hub reaches over 3,000 students every week with information about opportunities to get involved, provides practical volunteering opportunities, skills placements & internships, and support to students setting up projects and running societies. During the 2013-2014 academic year

² <http://www.studenthubs.org/>

Cambridge Hub engaged with 5,000 students in various activities and campaigns and trained almost 200 students.

The Cambridge Hub project sets out a number of key outcomes for their graduates in their engagement ladder:

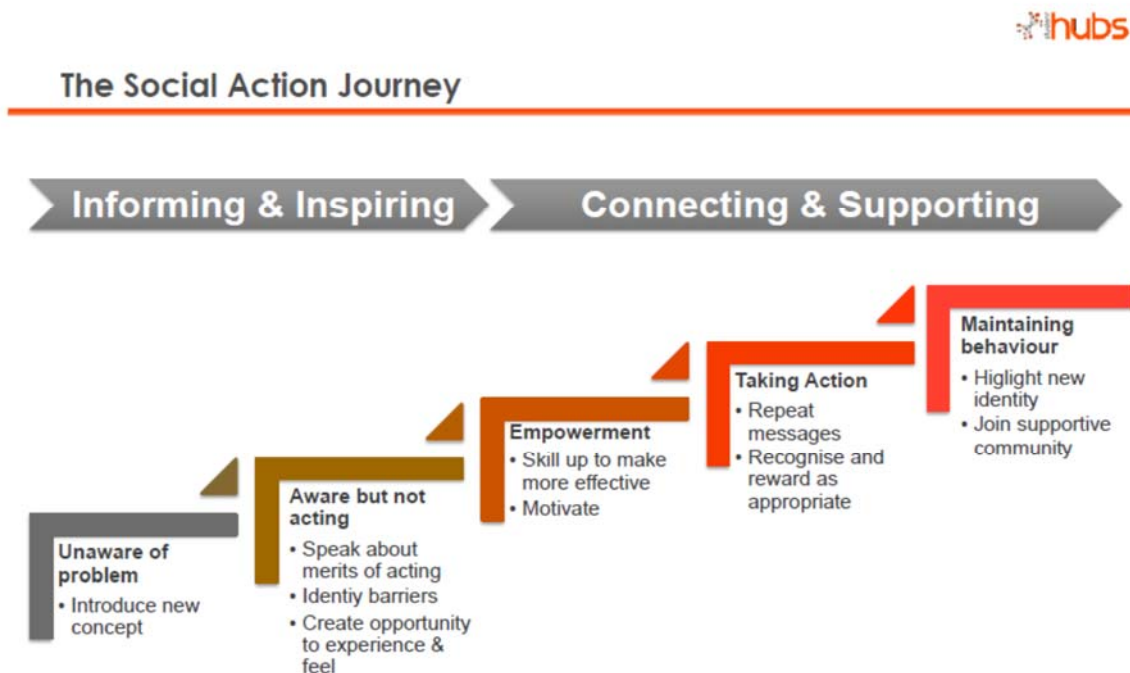


Figure 2: Student Hub engagement ladder

Section Two: Methodology

2.1 The aim of the evaluation

Cambridge Hub commissioned this analysis of its longer term impact to collate data from alumni who have benefited from working with the Hub and ascertain the influence it has had on their career and life choices. In common with many other third sector organisations, the funding environment for Cambridge Hub is somewhat turbulent, leaving the Hub vulnerable and uncertain over its future growth. It was felt by Hub staff that the evidence detailed in this report of the Hub's positive impact and the value that students have gained as a result of their experiences would be useful in securing future funding. Moreover the methodology could be scrutinised by Student Hubs to look at its suitability for replication by other hubs and to complement social impact measurement approaches being developed by the national Student Hub.

2.2 Methodology

A range of approaches may be adopted to measure the impact of a project of this kind and although only limited funding was available for this research we were still able to conduct a reasonable level of primary research, alongside a review of data previously collected by Cambridge Hub

In order to measure the extent to which the 'key' outcomes had occurred for the alumni the researcher carried out a two stage consultation process. This enabled the researcher to effectively capture this data and details about the full range of outcomes that occur for the alumni. The methodology used is outlined in more detail below.

First stage consultation

This initial engagement with students sought to explore and investigate what students themselves considered their outcomes to be as result of their involvement with Cambridge Hub and their broad perceptions of the services/role of the Hub.

The following questions were used and considered during this initial stage, for the telephone interview they were used only as a guide to facilitate an informal conversation.

This initial stage involved consulting with 7 students. A pragmatic, 'convenience' approach to sample selection was necessary due to the short time scale and limited resources for the project. Data was collected from these individuals that agreed to do so following an email approach by the Hub manager and a follow up email by the researcher.

Questions:

1. How would you describe your experience at the student Hub?
2. What change has occurred for you and your future as a result of your work with the Cambridge Hub? Have all the changes been positive? If not explain what has not been positive
3. What job do you do now?
 - a. Do you consider your role to have a social impact YES/NO.? If yes comment in box below.
 - b. Has your role at the Cambridge Hub influenced your job choices and if so how?
 - c. What other organisation(s)/person(s) has inputted into this
4. Do you do any volunteering now?
 - a. Has your experience at the student Hub influenced you decision to volunteer?
 - b. What other organisation/person has inputted into this (volunteering)
5. Are you currently involved with your local community? Community action? Engagement? If yes, what are you doing? –giving to charity? Expressing social views?
 - a. Has your experience at the student Hub supported your community action/engagement?
 - b. What other organisation/person has inputted into this?
6. Did your participation with the Cambridge Hub enable you to view a different side of Cambridge outside of University life?
 - a. How has it changed your perspective of Cambridge
 - b. How do you think that has helped you
 - c. How do you think it will help you in the future?

7. In the future do you think you are likely to pursue a career in a role that has a social impact?
 - a. Do you think the Hub impacted on this decision?
8. Do you think you will continue to participate in social or environmental action in the future?
9. How do you think the Cambridge Hub helped you to develop your employability skills to equip you for your working life?
 - a. What do you think would have happened without support from Cambridge Hub?
10. What other services/organisations contribute to the changes.

A report detailing all the feedback was subsequently produced for internal use.

Second Stage Consultation:

An online survey was established based on the first stage consultation and following discussion with the Hub manager. The questionnaire was sent to those students that reached step three on the student hub engagement ladder and those that are no longer participating in the project. Consequently the questionnaire was sent to approximately 120 students who fulfilled these criteria but also who the Hub had up to date email addresses.

The survey was open from 12 October to 2 November and 24 responses were received, giving a 20% response rate. The data was collected and analysed by the researcher and a report of all the findings was produced for internal use.

Secondary data analysis

As well as the consultation described above the researcher reviewed existing evidence of the project's impact collected by staff members at the Hub.

Who took part in the evaluation?

The evaluation involved working closely at all stages with Anna Malan, Hub Manager. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 4 graduates and received 3 online responses during stage one (n7) and during the second stage consultation students responded to an online survey (n24).

Section Three: Research Findings

On-going social and environmental impact after leaving university

3.1 Overall experience

There is a strong sense that involvement with the Hub had given students an overriding positive experience, and that they particularly valued having been able to link up with other like-minded people who were interested and passionate about ethical affairs, the environment and social action. Involvement also gave an insight into a wide variety of social impact activities being carried out throughout the university. Comments included:

“It gave me an insight into a wide variety of social impact activities carried out throughout the university, and allowed me to see how they might all relate to each other. It was a fantastic way of meeting engaged, passionate people”.

“It was a great time and loved the people I worked with, the Hub and the committee. The Hub has put me in touch with local stakeholders and people within the University that I would not have met without the Hub and these connections have been useful”.

“The Hub’s climate forum itself was a platform for meeting a lot of people within the environment sector, but also a way to keep up with current affairs related to climate change”.

“The Hub gave me the opportunity in the first year to navigate my way round what was happening at the University and what was possible through the networks I was able to access. Meeting people with the experience of running campaigns already at the university were valuable”.

When we asked students during stage two which three things they valued about the Hub on the whole they could be encapsulated under 5 headings:

- Working with likeminded people
- Exposure and learning about new causes, local community (Cambridge outside University) and charities
- The work experience and opportunity to develop or use skills
- Support of the Hub
- Opportunity to make a social impact.

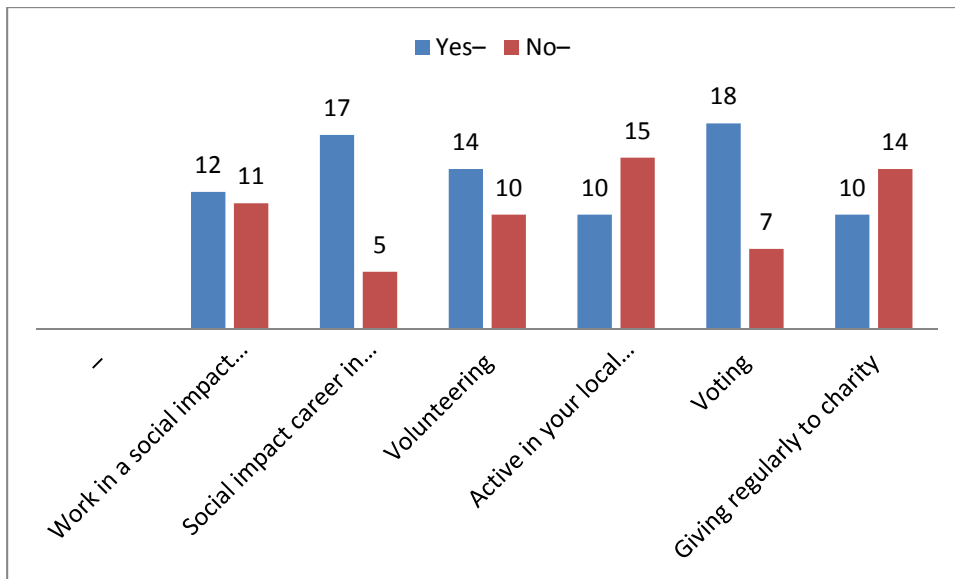
3.2: Key outcomes

The Hub sets out a number of key outcomes for graduates in their engagement ladder and the next section outlines to what extent these outcomes were achieved and the significance the Hub played in the achievement of these outcome. The outcomes relate to the ongoing contribution made by students to positive social and environmental impact after leaving the University. The ‘key outcomes’ are³:

- More likely to pursue a career with a social impact.
- More likely to volunteer
- More likely to give to charity
- More likely to vote

The researcher also looked asked individuals about whether they are currently involved in their local community. It is notable that all students reported that they were socially active in at least one of these ways and some reported they were active in all areas. Figure 3: shows the number of students against key outcomes and these results are described in more detail below.

³The research did not include the key outcome *-more likely to give money to university*



More likely to pursue a career with a social impact.

It was clear that on the whole graduates had found their experience at the Hub positive and that the Hub considerably expanded their understanding in the field of social/environmental action and enabled them to become much more engaged. The research endeavoured to establish whether this proactive stance taken at University translated into students pursuing a social/environmental impact career.

During the first stage consultation, it was found that 100% of graduates (7) were currently involved in employment that they feel has a social and/or environmental impact and they all stated that they would continue to pursue careers in the future that had a similar impact.

During the second stage consultation it was found that 52% of respondents are currently working in a social impact career and that 74% had the desire to pursue a social/environmental impact career in the future.

It was clear during the first stage consultation that most participants appeared to have already been concerned with social/environmental issues however involvement with the Hub helped them to take action as one interviewee said: *“the Hub showed me how this concern can be translated into action”*.

In order to consider the role that the Hub has played in influencing the graduates decision to get involved in social action we asked them to rate how much the Hub influenced their decision to work now or in the future to be working a social/environmental career using a 1 through 5 scale where 1 is low and 5 is high.

The research showed that on average students rated 3 (out of 5) for role the Hub had on influencing their decision to be in a social impact career now and 3.5 (out of 5) influence on their decision to be in a social impact career in the future.

These results suggest that the Hub has a significant impact on graduate’s career and that the hub has a long term impact on student career choices. However, it also indicates that there are other

influential forces. The following responses given by respondents during stage 1 and 2 help us to understand this:

“The Hub was certainly part of my growth at the university and encouraged me in this direction”

“Yes it enabled me to meet people who are involved in social action professionally, which has inspired me”

“I think I have always wanted to work in a field with real social/environmental impact – so hub not the prime reason – but it did teach me that working for these causes can be fun, rewarding, personable and challenging experience”.

“Doing the Ethical Internship scheme I gained valuable work experience which helped me on my way to find a suitable career path”.

A number of influences were mentioned by respondents such as international upbringing and family as well as involvement with other organisations for example:

- Giving What We Can,
- Park Slope food Co-op
- Global Scholars Symposium
- We Are Sister Stories
- The Church

One of the interviewees during stage one stated that there is a huge pressure for graduates to jump into a role straight from university in order to gain security and choose a safe option but one that you're not necessarily interested in. They went on to explain that they felt the Hub helped to resist this route and then went on to mention the inspiration and amazing example shown by in the Hub.

It was also apparent that the Hub helped graduates to become more confident and gain experiences that helped student embark on their careers, this will be discussed further in section 3.4. This influence and support shown by the Hub was expressed by one graduate as follows:

“Massively enhanced my CV. Learning skills such as organising events, on to leadership and teamwork when I became president, doing the social impact internship scheme which opened employment doors when I went to the Middle East. In turn got me into Worthwhile, which I've been told got me my current job at UNHCR. It changed my attitude towards the effectiveness and fun of smaller community projects. Showed me how much more agency and personal impact you have in smaller organisations. It showed me what a person working 'all out' for a cause really looks like, and certainly that intelligent and motivated people do choose social impact careers over money!”

It is evident that involvement at the Hub exposes participants to a diverse range of organisations, charities and societies within the University and enables them to explore wider challenges facing society today. This has improved their understanding of social and environmental issues and directed their energy and motivation to make a difference. As discussed above for a high proportion of the respondents this manifests itself through their chosen career paths. For others it is through other social action and this is discussed further in the next section

Volunteering

5 out of 7 stage one respondents actively volunteer and 58% of stage two respondents stated they currently volunteer. The Community Life Survey (2015)⁴ states respondents participate in informal (34%), formal (27%) and overall volunteering (47%) at least once a month. The levels for the alumni are considerably higher.

Again, we have endeavoured to explore the level to which the Hub has influenced the graduate's decision to volunteer on leaving university.

In order to consider the role that the Hub has played in influencing the graduates' decision to get involved in social action we asked them to rate how much the Hub influenced their decision to volunteer using a 1 through 5 scale where 1 is low and 5 is high. The average rate for influencing their decision to be a volunteer is 2.6 (out of 5). These results suggest that the Hub does play a role in influencing the student to participate in volunteering but also acknowledges that there are other influential forces. The following responses given by students during stage one and two provide a balanced view of the extent to which the Hub influenced their decision to actively volunteer or if their decision can be attributed to other organisations or people.

"I have always been someone who is keen to get involved with volunteering, but being part of the Hub certainly inspired me as to how many fantastic organisations there are out there to get involved in".

"Yes definitely, my experience at the Hub was so varied and I was involved in so many issues it diversified my understanding of many social issues. I would now feel uncomfortable not being involved in the community around me".

"Yes the Hub has taught me a lot about co-ordinating and organisation social impact activities".

"Not directly but part of a package of experiences".

"My interest in volunteering stems more from several volunteering trips abroad rather than the student hub".

"Personal experience and loss has shaped some of the specific volunteering I'm involved with".

More likely to give to charity.

4 of 7 (57%) respondents in the first stage consultation stated they gave regularly to charity. 42% of stage two respondents responded positively to the question. One respondent stated that

"The Hub broadened my exposure to the third sector beyond my existing passion and interest for the climate change/renewables. I became more educated in issues around vulnerable people, homelessness, refugees and immigration. As a result my charity commitments reflect this broadened mind-set as she support a charity involved in refugee integration, a local food bank and a charity operating in Africa"

⁴ Cabinet Office (July 2015) Community Life Survey (2014-2015)

Another said:

“I have increased awareness of charities. I currently run a number of fundraising campaigns for charities and I also give regularly to a number of National Charities”

And another said that

“I give regularly to shelter after the Hub’s homelessness campaign”

It is clear that in some cases the Hub has influenced individuals’ charity giving and when asked to rate the level of this using a 1 through to 5 scale where 1 is low and 5 is high the average score given was 2.3 (out of 5).

A number of students referred to an involvement with an organisation called ‘Giving What We Can’ as a major influence on their charitable giving and a few other organisations were noted with one person indicated that the Hub had no influence on their decision to give to charity.

More likely to vote

75% of individuals state that they currently vote and this compares to the 66.1% turnout for the 2015 general election. Whilst this shows a higher proportion voting respondents when we asked students to rate on 1 (low) to 5 (high) scale to what extent their commitment to voting was down to the Hub the average rate given was 1.3 and therefore we can conclude from this that the Hub generally only had a limited influence on whether an individual votes or not.

It is clear from this research that students involved in the Hub do continue to contribute to social and environmental action after leaving University. We have looked above at some the key ways they are doing this through volunteering and charity giving. During the first stage consultation a number of interviewees described how their time with the Hub had resulted in them becoming more socially active in other ways in their local communities. A number of examples follow:

One respondent described how she has set up a Spanish/English discussion group to help newcomers settle into area and recently joined the Transition Town group in my town. She stated *“it was through the Hub that I became aware of the Transition Town Movement”*.

One of the respondents stated they were actively campaigning on the issues of climate change and another described how her increased exposure to new Cambridge based organisations as a result of the involvement in the Hub had made her more curious about what community initiatives are going on around her and will continue to look out for these local initiatives where ever she moves.

3.3 Further outcomes

During the first stage consultation the following outcomes were identified by interviewees as occurring as a result of the intervention with the Cambridge Hub. These changes for students underpin and strengthen the ‘key’ outcomes discussed above:

- Better understanding of the field of social and/or environmental action
- Increased motivation to work in an area of social change
- Improved ability to act upon motivation for social change.

Graduates were asked whether they felt a change (positive or negative) relating to the above outcomes had happened as a result of their experience with the Hub.

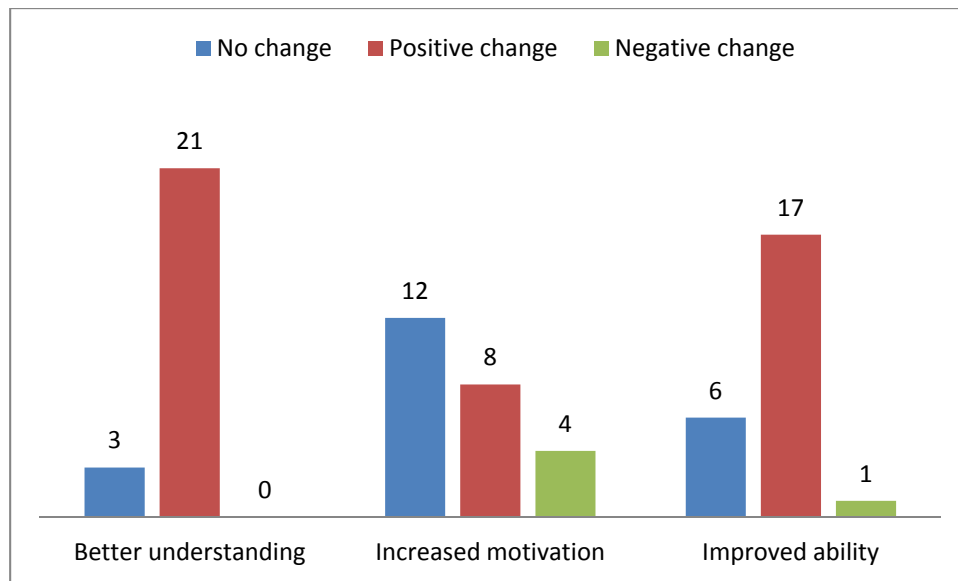


Figure 4: Outcomes achieved

There was a mixed response to this question with some respondents recording no real change for some of the outcomes and others reporting a positive change. In a few cases students implied there had been a negative impact for a number of outcomes. However, there was only one individual that recorded no positive change.

Figure 4 highlights 88% of respondent felt that they had gained a better understanding of the fields of social and environmental action with the remainder reporting no change; 33% of respondents reported a positive increase to their motivation to work in an area of social change with 50% reporting no change. This may reflect that individuals involved in the Hub are often already motivated therefore it was pleasing to see that 71% reported a positive change regarding improvements in their ability to now act upon their motivation for social change.

As one respondent reflects *“I think whilst my feral optimism remained high, I was inspired by witnessing said impact in novel and exciting ways that I hadn’t considered before the Hub”*.

Distance travelled

In order to measure not only *how many* people the change/benefit had happened for but to consider by *how much* people had benefited we asked graduates to rate the aforementioned outcomes and to think about where they were before taking up their role with the Hub and where they are now following the Hub experience. A rating scale of 1 through 5 scales where 1 is low and 5 is high was used. Using this information we have been able to calculate the average (mean) impact for the cohort. This measurement of how much something has changed is often referred to as ‘distance travelled’.

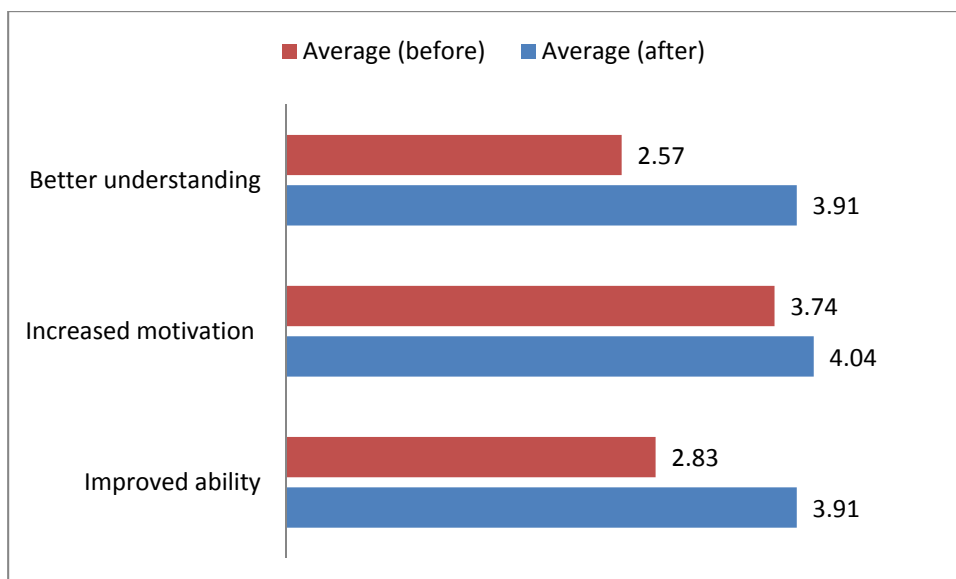


Figure 5: Distance travelled

Taking those individuals that recorded a positive change it can be said that students moved on average 1.5 to 1.6 points along the scale. Figure 5 however shows the average distance travelled across the whole cohort including those that reported no change or a negative change. It is noticeable that understanding and ability displayed greater impact than motivation for the cohort. This perhaps reflects that students often already motivated however, there is a clear sense from students that the Hub helps convert this motivation to action.

One respondent commented *“for me working with the Hub was a positive experience as it gave me a chance to try new skills and work in new structures that were much more similar to working life than academics. The hub refined my experiences and improved me as a campaigner”*.

3.4 Employability

Underpinning a number of the responses given by students throughout this analysis has been the reference made by students to the experience and skills gained as a result of their time with the Hub. All respondents expressed during the stage one consultation that their experiences at the Hub enabled them to gain new skills and knowledge that has assisted their employability opportunities and or social action. As one of the interviewees stated *“playing a leadership role and the skills gained is the biggest thing to take away from my experience at the Hub”*

Other comments given were:

“It gave me the experience of helping to run events and publicity, which has been useful skills”.

“The experience will help me to organise social action better, as organising events it is something that I have always found a bit intimidating and complex”.

“Team working, organisation skills and listening. The experience has helped me with my CV and during the interview for my current position”.

“I gained experience in managing others by being the co-ordinator for the Climate Change Forum, which will certainly prove valuable when I find myself in that position along my career”.

One respondent referred to the line management experience gained at the Hub. As she has not had the opportunity to line manage since leaving university this element of her experience is still prominent and relevant to strengthen her CV demonstrating that she is able and experienced at managing and motivating a team.

Another respondent echoed the significance it has had on her CV *“I feel my application for the scholarship (at Harvard University) was strengthened as a result of my work with the Hub”*. This reflected the practical experiences gained as a result of the respondent’s role organising the International conference such as project management, time management, organisational and leadership skills and soft outcomes such as increased confidence.

During the second stage consultation we asked graduates to rate to what extent the intervention from the Hub improved their competencies in a number of areas such as leadership and management. 52% of graduates felt that each of the competencies had been significantly or fairly significantly improved as a result of the intervention. Over 70% of graduates felt they had significantly or fairly significantly improved their employability skills and improved leadership skills and over 83% of graduates felt that their CV or job applications had been significantly or fairly significantly enhanced as a result of the experience together with 86% of graduates reported that they had gained experience of team working.

The lowest percentage change was given to *“I have improved line management skills”* and this is likely to reflect that not all graduates will have had the opportunity to experience line management as part of their engagement with the Hub.

Table 1 details to what extent respondent feel that the experience at the Hub improved their employability

	Significantly	Fairly Significantly	Not very significantly	Not significant at all	Not relevant
I have improved employability skills	33%	41%	21%	4%	0%
I have improved leadership skills	33%	33%	21%	13%	0%
I have improved project management skills	29%	38%	21%	13%	0%
I have improved organisational skills	25%	50%	17%	8%	0%
I have improved event management skills	46%	25%	17%	13%	0%

My CV and or Job application has been enhanced	8%	46%	25%	17%	4%
I have experience in team working	42%	46%	8%	4%	0%
Increased confidence	29%	33%	6%	13%	0%

Table 1: Employability attributes

It is well known that the University of Cambridge is able to attract students of the highest calibre from all over the world. However, the Hub should not underestimate the impact that it has on students. Evidence collected through this research clearly points to a positive direction of travel for students improving their employability skills, enhancing their CV, increasing student confidence and thus complementing the academic aspects of the student’s life. This in turn has helped with their career prospects and for these students in particular the prospect of them making an ongoing contribution to social and environmental impact on civil society.

3.4 Perspectives and experiences of University and Cambridge life.

The Hub is on a mission⁵ to remove the so called ‘town/gown’ divide in the city, Cambridge Hub’s vision is of a time when Cambridge University students are fully embedded into the wider community, with every single student engaging in social and environmental issues during their time in the city.

The Hub was therefore interested to explore if the students’ perspective of Cambridge outside of the University was altered as a result for the student’ time at the Hub. During stage 1 of the consultation it was made clear that the Hub did broaden the respondents’ knowledge of Cambridge beyond the university. This was partly attributed to the students’ increased awareness and knowledge of society’s organisation and charities including those not affiliated with the University such as Transition Towns and Cambridge Food Cycle.

“The Hub was a place where I felt much more connected with the student community and general public in Cambridge”. “I don’t think I would’ve known of the organisations without my involvement at the Hub”.

The extent to which participants were able to see a different view of Cambridge beyond the university varied depending on the role taken within the Hub. One participant felt it showed her how active Cambridge is environmentally compared to other places another said it made her aware of a lot of things happening in Cambridge that she wouldn’t be aware of without her time at the Hub. However, as her role at the Hub focused on a co-ordinating committee and publicity and therefore her experience at the Hub didn’t bring her directly in contact with local causes and social issues. She felt that other roles in the Hub would have reached out more. This was echoed by another respondent who felt that her participation in the Hub did not enable to her to view a different side of Cambridge outside of the University. However the respondent believes that if she

⁵ <http://www.socialincubatoreast.org.uk/?ventures=cambridge-hub>

had been involved with the Hub in a different capacity such as working with the local homeless she would have seen a different perspective.

In stage two the consultation revealed that 58% felt that the Hub had changed their knowledge and experience of Cambridge outside of the University and this demonstrates a positive impact the Hub is having on Cambridge.

“It showed me how dynamic, relevant and socially engaged Cambridge can be and it helped me to connect with other like-minded students”

“It showed me how active Cambridge is environmentally compared to other places”.

“It also changed my perspective of the University in that it revealed to me how many people at the University shared my social values and motivation and what was going on”.

“It made me realise that there is more to Cambridge than the university and that it has a pulse as a city independently from college life”.

“in the midst of the madness of a full on Cambridge degree it was a fantastic experience to be encouraged to look beyond ourselves, out into our local and global communities”

One respondent stated that the Hub did contribute to his stronger perspective of student life in Cambridge but went on to state however that *“I don’t feel the Hub enabled me to break out of the Cambridge bubble”*.

Another participant commented more generally about a change of perspective as a result of the Hub. *“It has helped me to believe that there are a lot of people with passion and a will to bring about change. I think I was bit more cynical and pessimistic before I joined the Hub”*

The University experience

In the above sections we have discussed in some detail about the broadening experience felt by students as a result of their time with the Hub. A number of respondents during stage one suggested that the Hub was a welcome distraction to academic pressures and indicated that before the Hub they were not enjoying their experience at University.

“I had felt a little isolated and disenchanted, but the Hub was definitely an important contributing factor to my increased confidence and general participation as a student”

“I didn’t really enjoy my first year as I didn’t feel particularly connected with the people I had met. Joining the Hub made my University life more complete and gave me some of my firmest friendships”.

One student felt it helped her get through her time at Cambridge. At the end of Year 2 she found she too was not enjoying life at the University and was thinking of dropping out. However, the work organising the conference gave her the distraction she needed from the academic side of University Life making it seem less important in a good way. *“A new dimension for my time at Cambridge emerged for me - one with positive feedback and one where which I really enjoyed”.*

During the second stage consultation 21% of students indicated a positive change in their enjoyment of the University as a result of their experience at the Hub. Three individuals indicated a negative impact on their enjoyment and this should be something the hub should be aware of and explore further in the future.

Anecdotes

Both during the first stage consultation and second stage consultation we asked graduates what they thought would have happened without their involvement with the Hub. The responses offer an insight into the impact the Hub had on individuals and some are listed below:

“It would have been a lot less interesting”!

“Less dynamic”

“More dull”

“I would not have got involved in environmental issues”

“I would not have got further involved in the social action scene”

“Less carried experiences, smaller network, worse CV, less inspired but better degree result”!

“My university experience would definitely not have been as enriching and would not have been inspired by the wonderful people I got to work with there. I might not be as socially engaged now”.

“I think I would have freaked out a bit more when I graduated. I think my time at the University may have been dull and disappointing if I had not met via the Hub all the interesting people I had the fortune to meet who were interested in the things that I care about”.

“It helped me enjoy university more”.

“That’s really hard to tell – it possibly helped me get the job given that a lot of people within the office are involved with the Cambridge Conservation Forum which is of a similar nature, but who knows”.

“I wouldn’t have met the interesting people and learnt some of the lessons without my participation with the Hub. However I think I would have still ended up where I am”.

“I might have completed PhD on time” as she said being the President of the Hub entailed a lot of work. She went on to say “it was worthwhile and enjoyable.”

Without the support of the Hub *student x* thinks she would not have got the Harvard Scholarship. *Student x* wouldn’t have the confidence to even apply, and if she did apply her application with the absence of her experiences and skills gained as a result of the student co-ordinator she feels would not have secured her the scholarship. This all has a significant impact on where she is today working for Harvard University and supporting a new start-up company.

Additionally, she feels it helped her get through her time at Cambridge. At the end of Year 2 she found she was not enjoying life at the university and was thinking of dropping out. However, the work organising the conference gave her the distraction she needed from the academic side of

University Life making it seem less important in a good way. *“A new dimension for my time at Cambridge emerged for me - one with positive feedback and one where which I really enjoyed”.*

3.5 Improvement suggestions for the Hub

It is clear that the Hub is a fantastic asset for the University and its students. Graduates overwhelmingly report positive outcomes as a result of their participation with the Hub. The research asked students to highlight areas that they felt would improve the Hub’s ability to facilitate social/environmental action.



A number of students suggested that they would like to see more long term opportunities for students to be involved in the Hub. This should be seen as a complement that individuals would like to extend their association with the Hub and is an area for the Hub to develop in the future including the development of paid opportunities post-graduation and one student suggested more career support for students to help them to identify career options in a social action field.

As with other third sector organisations there are fewer funding opportunities for organisation like the Hub and this hasn’t gone unnoticed by some of the students who have stated that the Hub need to seek a more sustainable and reliable funding stream and another suggested that more backing is need from the University. This is not the only area that student felt the University needed to support the Hub. It was noted by a number of students that the Hub needs to apply pressure to the University (colleges) regarding environmental issues.

There were a number of comments regarding the co-ordination of activities and clearer marketing both in terms of what the Hub does but also to engage more individual in volunteering, greater

awareness within the student community. Joint working with successful groups such as the Union could help meet this objective.

There were a number of more practical suggestions such as timings of training, having a framework to document and learn from past projects and getting a building that were mentioned as ways that the Hub could improve its ability to facilitate social and environmental action. It is clear from some of the responses that the Hub should continue to gather feedback from those that attend training to ensure that it meets student's expectations both in terms of the professionalism of the delivery, the number of training opportunities available and the timings of the classes. It is also evident that students feel that the Hub should have ambitions of a building or at the very least a larger office space to hold events and have big meetings.

Section Four: Conclusion

There is a strong sense that the Hub has a positive impact on the students that it comes into contact with. The primary research has illustrated how Hub graduates do go on to make a difference to society through their work, community action, volunteering or charity giving. There is robust evidence that the Hub contributes to their motivation to do this on leaving University and that as well as influencing student's social and environmental action they give them the know how to turn their passion and desire to do good into action.

Students reported that their skills had improved and this extended across a number of key employability attributes such as leadership, organisational skills and project management. Moreover, students in some cases felt that the skills gained, the increase in confidence helped them post university to secure work as the experience enhanced their CV but also enabled them to have demonstrable evidence to support discussions during interviews.

Students overwhelmingly talked about the camaraderie and the opportunity to meet with likeminded people and the connection made. It was clear that this concept of working together to meet a common goal has extended beyond their lives at University and stays with them on leaving university.

There is a clear sense of a shared vision and this seemed an important element of their Hub and University experience. The data gathered points to a significant role that the Hub plays giving the students the knowledge about social and environmental issues, and the 'know how' to support and campaign for these issues. This enables them to continue to make a long term social and environmental impact and to become social and environmental leaders now and in the future.

A report produced by iOpener Institute⁶ concludes that more than ever before, graduates are reporting that they need to believe the work they are doing has social purpose, and that this is a bigger motivation than starting salary when seeking employment. There is a clear role for Universities to arm the students with the knowledge and skills to navigate a career in the social

⁶ iOpener Institute for People and Performance (2012) Job fulfilment, not pay, retain generation y talent http://www.iopenerinstitute.com/media/73185/iopener_institute_gen_y_report.pdf

sector. The Hub therefore plays a pivotal role in supporting individuals to find a worthwhile role that make a valuable contribution to the economy or society.

The Hub appears to be going from strength to strength and its recent engagement with Social Incubator East will further its growth and impact.

It is recommended that the Hub should seek to improve its communication strategy and reviews its recruitment policy in order to build on their success and to attract those that are not interested at present in social issues. This will increase the impact that they have on individuals and reach of the social and environmental actions in communities and societies in the long term.

The Hub should develop some case studies to illustrate their impact and raise awareness of the Hub with the student community but also for potential funders and the colleges of the University of Cambridge.