



“You Said, We Did”: A Student-Led Industry Visit Model to Enhance Learning, Satisfaction, and Employability in Bioscience Education

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Abstract

University-industry engagement is often conceptualised as institutionally driven, with students positioned as passive participants rather than active agents. This paper challenges that framing through a case study of a partnership between Sheffield Hallam University and Labcorp Drug Development, a global contract research organisation. The collaboration began when an undergraduate placement student brokered a meeting between Labcorp and postgraduate course leaders. This initial engagement led to securing funding for a field trip and subsequently developed into a sustained partnership. The relationship has since deepened to include industry-delivered guest lectures across three modules, and ongoing discussions of student placements, a combined theory-practice degree, joint undergraduate and postgraduate research projects, and a joint BMRC grant application. Drawing on students-as-partners theory (Bovill et al., 2011) and literature on postgraduate and international student engagement (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017), the study evaluates the field trip using a purpose-designed pre- and post-intervention Likert-scale survey instrument ($n = 25$) spanning pharmaceutical industry understanding, academic relevance, career and employability awareness, and student experience. Mean scores increased across all domains (overall mean from 3.98 to 4.27/5), with the largest gains in industry understanding (+0.44) and the highest absolute scores in belonging and satisfaction. Reflective post-visit data highlighted the value of connecting theory to practice and emphasised the importance of the student-led nature of the initiative. The findings suggest that when postgraduate and international students are involved early as partners rather than asked to participate in pre-defined activities in industry engagement, the resulting partnerships generate significant gains in disciplinary understanding, career confidence, and institutional belonging, and can grow into sustained curriculum and research collaborations. The case offers a model for cultivating student ownership as an institutional strategy, rather than treating it as a peripheral practice.

Keywords

student ownership, students as partners, postgraduate education, industry engagement.

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