Tran Le Huu Nghia · Binh Chi Bui ·
Jasvir Kaur Nachatar Singh ·
Vinh N. Lu *Editors*

Graduate Employability Across Contexts

Perspectives, Initiatives and Outcomes

Springer

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Abbreviations

AICTE	All India Council of Technical Education
AMCAT	Aspiring Minds Computer Adaptive Test
AMTEC	Automotive Manufacturing Technical Education Collaborative
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AS	Academic Staff
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASHE	Association for the Study of Higher Education
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CultC	Cultural Capital
CV	Curriculum Vitae
ECAs	Extra-Curricular Activities
EQA	Educational Quality Assurance
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPA	Grade Point Average
GS	Generic Skills
HCM	Ho Chi Minh
HDBEDT	Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism
HDLIR	Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HESF	Higher Education Standards Framework
HumC	Human Capital
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
IdenC	Identity Capital
IELTS	The International English Language Testing System
IS	International Student

IT	Information Technology
JEE	Joint Entrance Examination
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
M	Mean
MA LLL	European Master's in Lifelong Learning: Policy and Management
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
NASPA	The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
NCES	National Center for Educational Statistics
NSS	National Service Scheme
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PACE	Professional and Community Engagement
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
Ph.D. (PhD)	Doctor of Philosophy
PIRS	Postsecondary Institutions Rating System
PR	Permanent Residency
PS	Professional Staff
PsyC	Psychological Capital
RQ	Research Questions
SAP	Student Ambassador Program
SD	Standard Deviation
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SocC	Social Capital
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TAP	Teacher Advancement Program
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
U.S. (US)/U.S.A. (USA)	The United States of America
U-I	University-Industry
UK	The United Kingdom
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USBLS	US Bureau of Labor Statistics
USD	United States Dollars
VNU	Vietnamese National University
VUW	Victoria University of Wellington
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning
YUA	Youth Union and Its Associates

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Chapter 1
Graduate Employability Agenda in Global Higher Education: Are We Moving in the Same Direction?

Vinh N. Lu, Tran Le Huu Nghia, Binh Chi Bui, and Jasvir Kaur Nachatar Singh

Abstract This chapter describes the need to develop employability for students so that they can best cope with changes in the current economic climate and employment market. It also highlights the tension in the employability agenda in the higher education sector due to different perspectives among stakeholders, institutional priorities, and availability of resources. It argues that personal and contextual factors heavily influence the adoption of and the effectiveness of implementing employability initiatives; thus, it is necessary to investigate how graduate employability is viewed, developed, and translated into employment outcomes and career development in different contexts. Finally, the chapter introduces the main contents to facilitate readers' follow of the book project.

Higher Education in an Era of Change

The higher education sector traditionally produces a skilled and academically qualified workforce, thereby serving the nation's socio-economic development. With the move toward mass and universal higher education, the traditional role is increasingly competing with the emerging role: enhancing students' career prospects (i.e., the ability to gain full-time employment upon graduation). There exist several reasons behind such change within the higher education systems and institutions.

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First, new knowledge and skills are generated much faster over the past century, almost doubling every year (Dehkord et al., 2017). As a result, university curricula cannot impart all of the new knowledge and skills needed for the modern workplace within three to four years. Even if universities could do so, graduates may not digest all the knowledge and master the skills within such a short time frame. Nevertheless, employers want new recruits to be career-ready (Brunner et al., 2018; McMurray et al., 2016; Stevens & Norman, 2016). Therefore, in addition to teaching specialized knowledge and skills, higher education institutions need to adjust their educational programs so that students are well-equipped for the contemporary job market.

Second, there have been constant changes in work arrangement and the emergence of career mobility. Permanent jobs are diminishing while precarious ones are increasing, which have been documented in Australia, Canada, and Germany, among several others (Lewchuk, 2017; Maciejewska et al., 2016). The change in work arrangement results in an increase in job mobility within or between organizations. Likewise, international businesses facilitated by globalization, the ease in migration policies, and the development of international education have all further enhanced labor mobility between countries, bringing more career opportunities for citizens worldwide. Without sustaining employability, graduates may not be able to successfully transition into the labor market, between jobs, or take up opportunities to develop a sustained career path.

Third, the modern work culture often involves knowledge and skills from different disciplines (Bajada & Trayler, 2013; Ivanaj & Ivanaj, 2010). It requires employees to be able to work independently and collaboratively with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and physical locations. Work outcomes are often the combination of the expertise of the team and far less reliant on individual expertise. Thus, equipping students with just technical knowledge and skills is not enough for them to function well in the workplace. Instead, students need to develop a strong command of non-technical skills allowing them to adapt to different work environments and conditions, collaborate with others, and continuously train to strengthen their expertise.

Within the aforementioned context of changes, the recent expansion of the higher education sector has offered learners greater access to advanced education and simultaneously increased the competition among graduates in the labor market. For example, between 1999 and 2009, the number of enrolments into Chinese universities increased 3.48 times, resulting in approximately 19 to 27% of unemployed or underemployed graduates, despite the consistently high economic growth rate in China. In the same period, about 48% of four-year college graduates in the United States of America are not employed in jobs that require a degree (Vedder et al., 2013). With an over-supply of graduates in the employment market, students should be prepared to cope with the changes in the marketplace.

Addressing the Changes: The Employability Agenda in Higher Education

In order to address the market changes, several policies and initiatives, with different foci, have been developed, creating the so-called employability agenda in higher education. Employability is often defined in relation to skills. It is "a set of achievements—skills, understanding, 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" (Yorke, 2006, p. 23). These skills help students "discern, acquire, adapt and continually enhance the skills, understandings and personal attributes that make them more likely to find and create meaningful paid and unpaid work that benefits themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy" (Oliver, 2015, p. 56). Employability is often demonstrated through different capital: human capital (mostly in terms of knowledge, skills, and attributes), social capital, cultural capital, career identity, and personal/career adaptability (Clarke, 2018; Fugate et al., 2004; Hartung & Cadaret, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017).

Nationally, many countries (e.g., the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, Canada, Denmark, Switzerland, France, and South Africa) have issued the national qualification frameworks that set out higher education learning outcomes. These frameworks aim to make graduates more employable and are linked to quality assurance and public funding schemes (e.g., Danish Government, 2003; Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2013, 2014; Thai Government, 2006; The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008). For example, in the 1980s, the British Government and employers articulated the need for training students in skills relevant for employment. Until the 1997 Dearing Report, universities were encouraged to develop programs that equip students with employability skills (Atlay, 2006). This was further politically consolidated by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, making developing employability for students compulsory in the UK higher education system (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2008). In Australia, the 1992-dated Mayer report (Mayer, 1992) recommended some competencies for tertiary institutions to develop employable graduates. Following this, numerous government-funded projects were conducted to examine the implementation of employability in Australian higher education systems, such as the National GAP project (Barrie et al., 2009a, 2009b) and the Hunters and Gatherers project (Lawson et al., 2013). Most influentially, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) was established in 2011 and issued the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF). The arrival of the AQF and HESF has politically made employability skills an indispensable component of the curriculum in Australian higher education (Australian Government, 2019).

Institutionally, in many institutions, developing generic skills for students has become an institutional priority to improve their teaching–learning quality in recent years. It is observed that the implementation of generic skills is also dependent on the context of the institution. Higher education institutions select different sets of skills (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009), develop institutional strategies (Barrie et al., 2009a, 2009b; Fleming et al., 2013), design curriculum models (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009a, 2009b), and utilize pedagogical practices (e.g., see Brodie, 2011; O'Connor et al., 2011; Rauchle & Reddan, 2012; C. Smith & Worsfold, 2015; M. Smith et al., 2009) that are aligned with their institutional visions and missions in order to impart those skills to students. Despite the rejection and doubt from some academics, the employability agenda has generally gained much-needed momentum in higher education.

However, the literature suggests diverse perspectives on employability. For example, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) found that employability was conceptualized following the evolution of human resources policies over time. It traditionally viewed employability as being able and willing to work at the beginning of the twentieth century, but then in the 1980s, it was regarded as one's transferable skill and the flexibility to move between job roles. Lately, Holmes (2013) presented three major competing perspectives toward graduation employability. The first views employability as possession of knowledge, skills, and attributes, which is the most popular view used in the policy and practice discourse. The second considers employability in relation to the social position one has, with an elite social status being more employable. The last view concerns employability in relation to identity, seeing it as negotiations between the graduate and the field of employment opportunities.

Such diverse perspectives toward employability, when put into practice, have resulted in numerous initiatives to prepare students for the world of work. Traditional work-integrated learning (WIL) programs such as internships or apprenticeships have long been adopted in vocation-oriented disciplines such as nursing, hospitality, or teacher education. They can now be found in many academic disciplines (Chen et al., 2018; Odio et al., 2014; Prabhu & Kudva S, 2016). Recently, alternative WIL such as virtual internships and simulations has been used in engineering disciplines as a response to a lack of relevant workplace-based internships in these disciplines (Fujimoto et al., 2017; Paul, 2015). Other disciplines may adopt project-based or field trips, mentoring, or service learning (Jollands et al., 2012; Kinash et al., 2016; Osman, 2011). Notably, there are disparities in the adoption of WIL initiatives in higher education. They may develop employability for their students within the curriculum, co-curriculum, or extra-curriculum; they may implement it university-wide or faculty-wide, on-campus and/or off-campus, with or without the participation of stakeholders from industry (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009a, 2009b; Bridgstock & Jackson, 2019; Kinash et al., 2014; Tran, 2019). WIL initiatives are also implemented differently across different higher education systems. For example, the Vietnamese higher education system is still very much centralized. Although the Ministry of Education and Training required all universities to invest in developing employability, institutions tend to showcase a compliant attitude, but the implementation is largely rhetoric due to a lack of institutional autonomy, particularly curriculum autonomy (Tran, 2019). In contrast, in systems where institutions have much autonomy like those in Australia, the implementation of employability programs is often questioned or resisted from the more traditional academics as it is seen as depriving their autonomy in teaching (Barrie et al., 2009a, 2009b; de la Harpe & David, 2012).

Although a great deal of effort and resources has been invested in graduate employability development programs, there is a limited number of studies investigating the effectiveness of such programs, both in the experience of key operators and in the graduates themselves when they enter the labor market. As higher education is in a rapidly changing landscape and graduates face a constantly changing labor market, the employability agenda in higher education appears to encounter much tension, which should be examined to propel the agenda forward.

Tensions in Implementing Graduate Employability Programs in Higher Education

The implementation of employability programs faces several challenges. From our observation and review of the relevant literature, stakeholders and institutions are responding differently to the graduate employability agenda. For example, as mentioned earlier, Australian universities have been found to embed different employability skills into the curricula consistent with their institutional missions and visions (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009; Tran, 2019). Vietnamese universities mainly use extra-curricular activities to develop generic skills, also known as soft skills, for their students, due to the lack of curriculum autonomy (Tran, 2017a, 2017c). Such differences in their responses can be attributed to the disparities in their perspectives about what constitutes employability and how to develop it for their students (Jones, 2009; Tran, 2017e). Their conceptualization of employability then can define the design of activities, delivery methods, and stakeholders involved in the employability development programs (Barrie et al., 2009a, 2009b; Tran, 2019). It can also be associated with institutional priority and availability of resources (Tran, 2017b, 2017e). For example, a research-intensive university would not prioritize employability programs as much as vocation-oriented ones. Thus, its leadership team may allocate less budget and resources to graduate employability development programs.

Several studies have pointed out that academics and students do not engage with the graduate employability agenda because they disbelieve in it or experience a shortage of access to resources and opportunities (de la Harpe & David, 2012; Jones, 2009; Tran, 2017d, 2017f). Existing research suggests that students lack awareness of the importance of developing employability skills as they focus too much on obtaining a high GPA and academic credentials with which they believe will help them win a job offer (Succi & Canovi, 2019; Tran, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2017e, 2017f). Even when they are aware, a lack of time caused by a busy studying timetable and other life commitments may prevent them from participating in employability development activities such as extra-curricular activities (Tran, 2017a). For academics, some studies have pointed out that their disengagement is directly connected to their beliefs about their role in higher education (Jones, 2009; Tran, 2017e). Generally, they believe that they are experts in a specific discipline; thus, they should train students in technical knowledge and skills, and other types of skills such as communication, teamwork, among others, should be self-trained by students or someone else or even by the employers. In many cases, they disengage because they are not interested, do not feel confident in their ability to teach and assess employability skills, are not incentivized, or explicitly asked to do so (de la Harpe & David, 2012; Tran, 2017f).

The Research Gap and the Focus of This Book

In the previous sections, we have described the changing landscape of the higher education sectors globally which has challenged their traditional view of curriculum design and delivery as well as the role of higher education institutions in the society. The graduate employability agenda appears to partially help address such issues and has been implemented more and more prominently. However, it is observed that despite recent contribution from different parts of the world, the majority of research literature about graduate employability derives from Western and/or developed countries such as the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. With market globalization and advances in information and communication technologies, policies and practices related to implementing graduate employability agenda are expected/predicted to circulate among higher education institutions and systems rapidly, the so-called educational policy borrowing phenomenon (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). However, it has been observed that in some countries and institutions, the graduate employability agenda is executed differently with diverse perspectives, initiatives, and results (e.g., Tran, 2019; Barrie et al., 2009a, 2009b; Kinash, 2016). Several research gaps can be identified here:

1. What is graduate employability viewed by stakeholders in different higher education sectors?
2. How are these stakeholders' views put into the implementation of graduate employability?
3. What are the outcomes of the implementation like, and what are the influential factors?
4. To what extent do students engage with developing their employability and why?
5. How do graduates translate their employability capital into employment outcomes and career advancement?
6. What can explain differences in higher education stakeholders' perspectives, practices, and engagement with the graduate employability agenda?

To help narrow the identified research gaps, this book aims to explore differing stakeholders' perspectives, practices, and engagement with implementing the employability agenda in higher education. The book also explores graduates' translation and further building of employability post-graduation for career success within a rapidly changing world. Largely framed within Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus, and capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), and successors who develop employability capital related to Bourdieu's ideas such as Fugate et al. (2004), McQuaid and Lindsay (2005), Tomlinson (2017), Clarke (2018), this book is expected to generate more insights that can help advance the employability programs in higher education. Generally, the main concept of our book can be briefly explained as: Institutions and individuals are bound by different contextual factors which may define how they should act and react (i.e., the social field). Likewise, institutions and individuals may have different types of resources available and differ in the extent to which they can get access and use such resources (i.e., capital). Therefore, when it comes to realizing the employability agenda, they may view, think, and act differently to fit with the context and availability of resources (i.e., their habitus). Such dynamic interactions between the social field, habitus, and capital may result in various viewpoints, initiatives, engagement, and outcomes related to employability. The interactive dynamic of these three variables and its results, therefore, needs to be further explored in different contexts. Gaining international perspectives and experiences with the graduate employability agenda in different contexts would advance our insights into the graduate employability agenda in higher education. It also indirectly helps address the challenges exposed to the higher education sectors reported earlier and elevate the role of higher education institutions in our modern society. It will also promote the appreciation of diversity in the way higher education stakeholders view, act, and react in developing employability for students/graduates across contexts in the world.

This edited book is a valuable reference for scholars, graduates, employers, policymakers, university communities, and other stakeholders who are concerned about the implementation of graduate employability in higher education. Highlights of the book are:

- It provides readers with a comprehensive review of how employability development for students has emerged as a key priority in higher education across the globe, taking into account different higher education stakeholders' perspectives.
- It highlights interesting and distinct differences in the conceptualization and implementation of graduate employability among higher education institutions and systems.
- It depicts and compares how stakeholders are involved in the implementation of employability initiatives, navigate opportunities, tackle contextual factors, submit to constraints enforced by political forces, and how they use institutional advantages available for the implementation.
- It also examines the actual experience of students, graduates, and lecturers/academic staff members in the implementation of employability programs. Their personal perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors are key factors behind the success or failure of the implementation of the graduate employability agenda.

- It depicts the whole cycle of employability development and utilization, emphasizing employability is a lifelong process, not just a fixed asset of higher education.

Structure of the Book

Following the current *Introduction*, this book includes 18 chapters, which are organized into five parts:

Part 1: Context of Graduate Employability Development in Higher Education

The two chapters in this section will set the background for the book. Chapter 2 reviews the employability agenda in higher education, pointing out that perspectives on and initiatives to develop employability for students have not yet reached a consensus. It reports the graduate skills gap and analyzes the determinants of employment outcomes and career success. The chapter especially argues that there is always some disconnection between the employability capital that graduates possess by the time of graduation and the one needed for employment and career development, and thus, employability is more a lifelong developmental process. For this reason, it argues that, while questioning how, different stakeholders should help their students and/or graduates to develop graduate employability, navigate employment opportunities, overcome challenges, and negotiate with their career interests in order to secure employment, develop their career, and remain employable within our volatile world.

Chapter 3 presents a theoretical lens to understand how stakeholders view and respond to employability development initiatives as well as how graduates utilize their employability capital for their career, mainly based on Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus, and capitals. The social field in this book can be understood as the context in which stakeholders function around the employability agenda, bound by all shared perspectives and values. Habitus is the way stakeholders think and act to align with the shared perspectives and values related to employability embedded in the context where they function. Social field and habitus mutually influence each other and can make changes to each other. However, capital in this book is not limited to the traditional Bourdieu's economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, but it also denotes ones recently discussed by other researchers such as human capital, psychological attributes, and career identity (Clarke, 2018; Fugate et al., 2004; Holmes, 2013; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005; Tomlinson, 2017), despite the overlapping in their viewpoints. The chapter argues that, when coming to implementing the employability agenda in higher education, different stakeholders, institutions, and higher systems may respond and adopt different strategies as the results of complex interactions between the social field, habitus, and access to capital. The chapter argues for the relevance of using Bourdieu's and related authors' concepts of social fields, habitus, and capital in combination to understand perspectives, initiatives, and outcomes of graduate employability implementation.

Part 2: Perspectives on Employability

The four chapters in this section provide critical insights into perspectives of different higher education stakeholders about employability and what makes graduates employable across different national settings. Chapter 4 reports a study exploring the employability skills that four Victoria-based universities (Australia) of different institutional contexts prepared for their business students. Content qualitative analysis reveals that communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, presentation, use of tools, and technology skills were the most common human capital that all four universities choose to develop for their students. They also prepare for their students' social, cultural, and psychological capital via curricular and extra-curricular activities, including internships, overseas exchange programs, and other activities. It also reveals how these universities assisted students in shaping their career identity through career planning and management. Most interestingly, this study points out the differences in employability skills in research-intensive versus vocationally-oriented universities. The authors attributed such differences to the disparities in their institutional visions and missions.

In Chapter 5, the authors examine the essential employability skills for hospitality graduates in Vietnam from employers' and graduates' perspectives. Interview and survey data show that technical knowledge and skills, soft skills, management skills, leadership skills, and professional development skills were rated as either "important" or "highly important" by the participants. There is a high consensus on the importance of these skill sets, except for leadership, which graduates rated significantly higher than employers did. The authors explain the importance of these skills and perspective differences with reference to the socio-economic and cultural contexts of Vietnam and the hospitality industry in the country.

Involving different stakeholders' perspectives, the authors of Chapter 6 investigate the perceptions of teachers, graduates, and current students in identifying the perceived determinants of employment outcomes for IT graduates in India and the factors contributing to low employability among IT engineering graduates. The study shows that, although current students, graduates, and educators agree on the importance of human, social, and identity capitals, their perceptions about determinants are different from each other. While teachers place much importance on human capital and identity capital, students/graduates consider social capital key to their career development. This chapter discusses significant important implications to better develop employability for IT students.

Chapter 7 shifts the discussion of employability for local students to employability for international students. Situating the study in a Malaysian university context, the author examines the employability skills of international research students. Qualitative data drawn from 27 semi-structured interviews reveal that students perceived employability skills, such as research, teaching, technical, and project management skills, as vital for their career outcomes. Other skills, such as communication skills (both written and oral), interpersonal skills, flexibility, problem-solving and career planning, and personal attributes such as self-confidence and flexibility are necessary ingredients for the development of the skills cited. The chapter concludes that employability skills should be contextualized to prepare international students for various employment opportunities either in their home, host, or a third country.

Part 3: Initiatives to Develop Employability for Students

This section examines institutional responsiveness to the employability agenda and features different initiatives related to developing employability for students in higher education across the globe. Generally, the five studies reveal different levels of institutional responsiveness and identify the advantages and disadvantages of the initiatives in different institutional or disciplinary contexts.

In Chapter 8, the author investigates the level and nature of responsiveness that Ethiopian public and private higher education institutions exhibit toward graduate employability. Using national data available on 13 public and private institutions, the author finds that despite the rapid expansion, there are serious concerns about the ability of Ethiopian universities to respond to employers' and labor market demands. While the policy directions appear to recognize the impending challenges of graduate employability, many institutions have not been ready to respond to such demands in an organized and efficient manner. The author remarks that in the absence of needed structures, systems, and learning experiences within and outside the university, the institutional capacity to develop the employability of graduates remains restricted. The author argues that enhanced university-employer interaction and proactive institutional schemes are bases for improving responsiveness toward graduate employability.

Chapter 9 highlights institutional strategies in developing generic skills as an important component of employability for students. Contextualizing the study in six Vietnamese universities, the author analyzed the models adopted by these universities to train students in generic skills and their experience with the implementation. Content analysis of relevant documents and 69 interviews with key informants of the implementation reveals that despite sharing a similar concept for executing generic skills policy, these universities translated it into practice differently, in terms of implementation scale, the channels, and pedagogical practices through which generic skills are imparted to students. The analysis shows that curriculum autonomy, university leadership, and connection with external stakeholders were pivotal for the success in implementing these models.

Continuing with the line of discussion in the previous chapter, Chapter 10 reports how a Malaysian research university enhances the employability of international students. Thematic analysis of 55 semi-structured interviews with postgraduate international students and staff members reveals that this university has initiated several within-curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular initiatives to develop international students' discipline-related skills, soft skills, and cross-cultural/interpersonal skills. The chapter discusses the differences in the adoption of these initiatives with references to the Malaysian Government's vision and policies for becoming an international education hub.

Chapter 11 will seek to critique the dominant models of work-integrated learning (WIL) in journalism education, explore emerging models of WIL, and investigate the value of these innovations in WIL models. In offering a critical review of the current approaches to WIL in journalism education, this chapter also presents several university-led WIL case studies as options for expanding and increasing equitable opportunities for journalism degree students. The author suggests that ensuring equitable access to practical opportunities, informed by current and future industry requirements, is vital in providing graduates with the skills and experience necessary for employment.

Chapter 12 shifts the discussion to developing employability for students outside the main curriculum. Extra-curricular activities (ECAs) have been found effective in developing employability for students, particularly in terms of soft skills; however, little is known about student engagement with ECAs. The quantitative study reported in this chapter investigates student engagement in ECAs, with the participation of 440 students from various higher education institutions in Vietnam. The findings reveal discrepancies in cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement among students of different genders, academic disciplines, and academic years. The author explains such discrepancies in their engagement levels in terms of students' beliefs under the influence of Vietnamese sociocultural values, i.e., their habitus in developing employability within the social field of Vietnamese higher education.

Part 4: Translating Employability into Employment Outcomes and Career Advancement

This section includes six empirical studies about how graduates utilize their employability capital and resources to secure employment outcomes and develop their careers. It shows that the translation process is influenced by several personal and contextual factors. Empirical evidence, thus, suggests that one's employability is not a fixed asset but an evolving one, fostered by a lifelong process; thus, higher education institutions and stakeholders need to consider this when developing graduate employability.

Chapter 13 features US employers' perspectives about how graduates can best demonstrate their employability to fit in a job position. Recognizing the enlarging gap between what higher education institutions teach and what employers demand, the authors argue that, in order to enhance graduates' employment prospects, it would be vital to understand what employers need and what an (un)employable graduate is like in their perspectives. Using Hawaii-based job interviewers' perspectives, they identify the importance level of 29 qualities and picture the image of what an (un)employable graduate is like. The study provides important implications about how graduates should demonstrate their employability to prospective employers, the first step to translations of their employability into employment outcomes.

In Chapter 14, the author explores graduates' translation of employability into employment outcomes and career advancement in the context of the South African teaching industry, using perspectives of both employers and employees. Thirteen interviews with principals reveal that employment outcomes are decided based on graduates' teaching qualifications and experience, hard and soft skills, and other qualities. In addition, 15 interviews with currently employed teachers indicate that they succeeded in securing the job by demonstrating their employability through their subject area strengths, student and classroom skills, non-discipline skills, and personal attributes. In these teachers' and employers' views, employed teachers can sustain their employability in the teaching profession by participating in professional development activities, developing lifelong learning ability, strengthening social networks through teamwork, enhancing technological competence, and maintaining work ethics.

Chapter 15 discusses the process of job hunting and career development of 16 international graduates who stayed in Australia upon graduation. Through semi-structured interviews, the authors find that participants used different strategies to look for job opportunities and demonstrated their employability to prospective employers. How they can develop and demonstrate human capital, social capital, cultural capital, psychological capital, identity capital is found to collectively contribute to participants' success in securing their full-time jobs. The authors conclude that teaching students to demonstrate their employability is as important as developing employability for them, especially in labor markets where international graduates are disadvantaged. The chapter also discusses some implications for Australian universities and their international students to enhance the latter's career prospects.

The process of career development is an "active social process" with the transformation of one's capital and career identity within the labor market. In Chapter 16, the author analyzes career development stories of five international graduates of an Erasmus Mundus program (Europe) within a 10-year-period post-graduation to see how their employability agency shaped the course of their career development. The author finds the international graduates adopted various strategies to build and utilize the capital they had when searching for employment in their home and host countries, as well as to cope with personal and structural hindrances. Their agency related to building and utilizing different forms of capital as well as resilience in coping with hindrances are vital for their career development.

Chapter 17 highlights the employability of doctoral graduates in the US labor market. Contrary to the common assumption that doctoral graduates are highly-skilled individuals who are able to gain well-paid jobs upon graduation, the authors depict doctoral graduates' different experiences in translating their employability assets into employment outcomes. Through Bourdieu's lens, they highlight that despite obtaining a doctoral degree from an American university, the graduates' personal and educational backgrounds, their visions and ambitions as well as beliefs influenced their actions in building their post-graduation career. The study reported in this chapter also detects the disparity in the influence of the labor market, sociocultural, and political factors on the course of career development of these doctoral graduates.

Chapter 18 provides a distinctive account of career development of a female Vietnamese academic. Using self-reflection, the author shows that her career development trajectory was not linear but was filled with many ups and downs. Her family duties, sociocultural practices, and stereotypes against female capability in a Confucian heritage culture suppressed her agency for career development, resulting in a non-progressive period in her career. Her career identity and psychological attributes helped her a great deal in navigating opportunities and attaining her career goals. These two elements supported her to exercise agency, combining the capital and resources she had, and further developing the capital she was missing in order to advance in her career.

Part 5: Conclusion

Chapter 19 summarizes the main findings in the previous chapters, arguing that employability is a lifelong process with significant negotiation between each individual and the contextual factors to advance in one's chosen career paths. It points out how a narrow conception of employability adopted in higher education may impede graduates' career development. It proposes that, instead of viewing graduate employability as graduates' possession of knowledge and skills by the exit point out of higher education, it should be seen as a lifelong process as well as an evolving and context-dependent entity. It will provide practical implications for higher education providers, graduates, and employers to improve new graduates' transition into the labor market and develop their career in a target industry. The chapter also develops a framework illustrating how careers can be developed within the context of a turbulent job market. This framework may help inform policy, research, and practice in the field of graduate employability and career development.

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Part I
Background

Chapter 2

From Employability to Employment Outcomes and Career Advancement: A Literature Review

Tran Le Huu Nghia, Binh Chi Bui, Jasvir Kaur Nachatar Singh, and Vinh N. Lu

Abstract This chapter set a theoretical background for the current book. The chapter begins with a review of how employability is conceptualized differently, sometimes competing with each other. It then reviews how higher education institutions develop employability for students via curriculum-based, extra-curricular, work-based, and community-based activities. It discusses the translation of graduate employability into employment outcomes and career development, with a focus on influential factors during that translation process. Based on the literature review, it argues that graduate employability should be seen as a lifelong process of building and utilizing different forms of capital for attaining employment and career goals. It also calls for further research into perspectives and initiatives to develop graduate employability in different contexts as well as how it is translated into employment outcomes and career development. In general, while this chapter points out research gaps related to the employability agenda in higher education, it also provides background knowledge so that readers can understand the empirical studies reported in subsequent chapters.

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Introduction

Graduate employability is not a new concept in higher education; however, it appears not to have gained consensus on what it is and its components. Although it is often viewed as employment outcomes, several researchers and authors have argued that employability denotes much a larger domain than simply securing a full-time job upon graduation, covering all aspects that make graduates remain employable throughout their life (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005; Yorke, 2006). Employability also denotes the ability to create jobs for oneself and others (Oliver, 2015). Possibly, it is this disparity in stakeholders' perspectives on employability that has resulted in different approaches adopted by higher education institutions (HEIs), academics, and each student to develop graduate employability (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Kinash et al., 2014, 2016; Tran, 2019). Although employability development initiatives may be "borrowed," the reasons behind it and the implementers' experience with it in different contexts, be it a higher education system, institutions, or a discipline, is often under-explored. It is also noted that even when students can successfully develop employability and are ready for their career, there is no guarantee that they will succeed in obtaining jobs or developing a career relevant to their studies and expectations. There are many factors of the deriving from graduates themselves, employers, and job markets that prevent them from translating their employability into employment outcomes and career advancement (Clarke, 2018; Tran et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important to further explore stakeholders' perspectives about graduate employability, the initiatives currently in place to develop it, and how it is translated into employment outcomes or career development.

This chapter aims to provide foundational knowledge as well as introduce key concepts in the field of graduate employability and the relationships among them to facilitate readers' understanding of the subsequent chapters. The chapter begins with a review of how employability is conceptualized and different perspectives, sometimes competing, toward graduate employability. It then reviews how higher education institutions develop employability for students via curriculum-based, extra-curricular, work-based, and community-based activities. It discusses the translation of graduate employability into employment outcomes and career development, with a focus on influential factors during that translation process. Based on the literature review, it argues that graduate employability should be seen as a lifelong process of building and utilizing different forms of capital for attaining employment and career goals. This conceptualization of employability will be used as the key concept of this book project. In general, this chapter points out research gaps related to the employability agenda in higher education, and simultaneously it provides background knowledge for the comprehension of empirical studies included in this book.

Graduate Employability as a Multi-faceted Concept

What is Graduate Employability?

There are different ways to define the construct of employability (Harvey, 2001). In simple terms, (graduate) employability is defined as the ability to be employed (Vanhercke et al., 2014). It is also viewed as the ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment, gain new employment, and ensure the employment pertinent to one's educational level in order to benefit themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Oliver, 2015). However, what specific skills are necessary for a workplace may vary across space, time, and employers (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Cai, 2013; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). For this reason, scholars find the focus on skills and attributes narrow (e.g., McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005; Suleman, 2018; Yorke, 2006). In fact, employability is multi-dimensional, positional, or processual, depending on the context that it is conceptualized (Clarke, 2018; Fugate et al., 2004; Holmes, 2013; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005; Tomlinson, 2017).

According to Fugate et al. (2004), employability is a psycho-social construct comprising individual qualities that enable graduates to address the changes in and interact with the world of work. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) call to replace it with a broader conception of employability encompassing "personal circumstances" and "external factors" (p. 215). According to Yorke (2006), employability is both good learning achievements that suggest effective work performance and a process of continually developing that capacity. It is "the skills, understanding and personal attributes that make them more likely to secure employment and be successful in their chosen occupation to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy" (Yorke, 2006, p. 8). This broader concept of employability does not equate employability to employment; rather, it views employability as enabling graduates to secure employment, thriving in their career, and helping them remain competitive and employable throughout their life (Yorke, 2006). Employability is therefore a process, not an outcome (M. Smith et al., 2018), such as obtaining a job within some months after graduation (Bridgstock, 2009).

Employability is a complex construct (Suleman, 2018; Yorke, 2006), which harbors fuzz and lacks clarity and specificity of meanings (Römgens et al., 2020). Bridgstock (2009) suggests that there should be an expansion of the meaning of graduate employability, with a focus on career management skills. Likewise, Clarke (2018) proposed a new framework for employability, seeing it not just the ability to obtain jobs but also many dimensions related to graduates' transition from higher education to the labor market. It may be a list of skills and attributes, the perceptions of job opportunities, the social networks that make graduates employable, market conditions that determine jobs and pay, among other dimensions. Tomlinson (2017) addresses this multidimensionality in terms of employability capitals. They are human capital, social capital, cultural capital, identity capital, and psychological capital. It cannot be denied that this employability framework is important to understand employability. It shows that employability can catch all concepts with reference to graduates' transition to the labor market and their central role in the connection between higher education and the labor market over time.

Components of Employability

Employability capital, as documented in the literature, is comprised of human capital, social capital, cultural capital, personal adaptability, and career identity (Clarke, 2018; Fugate et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2017). They have some overlaps, interconnected, and fluid (Tomlinson, 2017). Understanding these concepts will help contextualize the current higher education sector's employability efforts by gauging their emphasis on any or all of these forms of capital. This literature review will also help to understand our research context.

Generally, human capital is regarded as abilities, expertise, and know-how that enhances graduates' work performance (Hogan et al., 2013). The term also refers to personal variables such as age, education, work experience, training, skills, and knowledge that predicts one's career advancement (Fugate et al., 2004; McArdle et al., 2007). Human capital development is considered the main foundation for graduate success (Clarke, 2018).

Social capital refers to "the sum of social relationships and networks that helps mobilize graduates' existing human capital and bring them closer to the labor market and its opportunity structures (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 342). It enhances individuals' employability thanks to friends', colleagues' and acquaintances' useful advice and practical assistance to look for jobs and perform their job better. Similarly, employees often look for jobs via their informal networks (Fugate et al., 2004; McArdle et al., 2007). However, the impact of social networks on one's employment outcomes and career success is still questioned in social capital literature (McArdle et al., 2007) and requires further research in different contexts.

Cultural capital is reported in relation to an individual's education status (McArdle et al., 2007). More specifically, the term refers to cultural signals such as attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behavior, and credentials that are aligned to the workplaces that graduates seek to enter (Tomlinson, 2017). Developed by the French sociologist Bourdieu (1986), the term also signifies the transference of cultural knowledge between an individual's socio-cultural environment and the educational context. After Bourdieu, there has been extensive discussion on the role of cultural capital in one's career development (Donald et al., 2018; Tomlinson, 2017).

Psychological capital refers to attributes such as confidence, hope, resilience, flexibility, and adaptability that help graduates maintain their positive attitudes about career prospects (Fugate et al., 2004; Hartung & Cadaret, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017). This capital enhances graduates' willingness and ability to change behavior, feelings, and thoughts—necessary for their employment in the contemporary market (Fugate et al., 2004). This capital may be associated with the career identity (Hartung &

Cadaret, 2017), which acts as a compass for them to navigate the labor market and realize whom they want to be.

Career identity, also equated with "self-concept and personal narratives" (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 345), regards the way individuals define themselves in the career context (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). Career identity involves personal interests, capabilities, goals, and cultural values (Adams et al., 2006). Identity capital comprises individuals' career motivation, personal meaning, and individual values (McArdle et al., 2007). It is not fixed but an "an on-going and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one's own values and experiences" (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 220); thus, it can drive the development of students'/graduates' skills and attributes.

Finally, it should be noted that the capital mentioned above is not independent constructs, but they may overlap and mutually influence each other's development. For example, an initial career identity can direct students to develop knowledge, skills, and attributes (i.e., human capital) and build a social network (i.e., social capital) necessary to realize that career identity. Simultaneously, the development of human capital and social capital may shape graduates' career identity development to best use these two types of capital for labor market success.

Competing Perspectives on Employability

Literature suggests that there are many perspectives about employability. For example, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) found that employability was conceptualized following human resources policies through time. It was viewed as those being able and willing to work at the beginning of the twentieth century, but then in the 1980s, it was regarded as one's transferable skills and the flexibility to move between job roles. Lately, Holmes (2013) presented three major competing perspectives toward graduation employability, with limitations of each view. According to Holmes (2013), there are three competing perspectives—possession, position, and process. Employability as possession is indicated by certain characteristics such as achievement of skills, understandings, and personal attributes. It reflects the human capital dimension of employability defined by researchers, such as Hogan et al., (2013) and Clarke (2018). Employability as social position refers to specific social features that construct and place us at a specific position in the society: family background, ethnic group, gender, religion, etc. All of these contribute to forming the way we think and act as well as access to resources for our employability. This perspective is very much related to the social capital and cultural capital that we discussed above. Employability as a process constructs it around the idea of career building being an identity construction project. Identity can be self-claimed, but it is also important to be acknowledged by others (see Lauriala & Kukkonen, 2005). In this perspective, graduate employability is "the always-temporary relationship that arises between an individual graduate and the field of employment opportunities" when graduates interact with "gatekeepers to those opportunities" (Holmes, 2013, p. 550). Graduates have to continuously build all capital that the gatekeepers expect until they acknowledge it, i.e., the graduates' identity/ identities are confirmed or acknowledged.

Holmes (2013) corroborates that each perspective on employability presented has problems. The human capital perspective is challenged because skillsets are understood differently by people and do not explain why people have different employment outcomes (Holmes, 2013). This is the naive assumption of the human capital perspective that once people have spent a number of years accumulating human capital, they automatically obtain jobs and earn income (Tan, 2014; Vandenberghe, 1999). The social positioning perspective also has flaws as access to jobs is not equal because graduates from different backgrounds have different cultural capital (Aziz, 2015; Holmes, 2013). Also, one's social positioning may change through time. This can be illustrated by the case of international graduates staying in the host country, being disadvantaged as immigrants, but many of them can gradually move up to the middle class. According to Holmes (2013), the processual approach is more robust than the other two. Under the processual perspective, graduates' emergent identity is negotiated, confirmed, and disconfirmed overtime during interaction with different social realities, especially with different gatekeepers or decision-makers/employers (Holmes, 2013). It suggests that graduates need to continually present their graduate identity through behavioral practices so that these gatekeepers agree that they deserve pertinent employment.

Despite the competition between employability perspectives, the "employability as possession of skills" perspective has been dominantly adopted by several stakeholders, including policymakers, employers, and even academics (Clarke, 2018; Holmes, 2013). This has resulted in the implementation of a skill-based or competency-based approach in higher education to preparing students for their future careers (Holmes, 2013; Römgens et al., 2020). However, it seems that there has been a move beyond the skill-based or competency-based approach to embracing other perspectives and approaches to developing employability for students. Observing the competency-based approach to European education, Römgens et al. (2020) identified two disconnected streams of literature on employability. The first one is associated with higher education. Employability in this stream is conceptualized in six dimensions—disciplinary knowledge, soft skills, emotional regulation, career development skills, self-management, and self-efficacy. The second one is associated with workplace learning. Employability in this stream is conceptualized in five dimensions—human capital, social capital, lifelong learning and flexibility, reflection on self and organization, and a healthy work-life balance. Römgens et al. (2020) corroborate that in order to address the obscured meaning of employability, the dimensions of the two streams should be integrated, resulting in seven dimensions of employability: applying disciplinary knowledge and human capital; transferrable generic skills and social capital; emotional regulation; career development skills, lifelong learning, and flexibility; self-management and reflection on the self, organization, and self-management; self-efficacy, and a healthy work-life balance. Connecting the two helps avoid the problem of mere focus on learning and assessing skills, which fails to help graduates translate their employability into employment outcomes (Mason et al., 2009). It also sets the trend of researching employability as a process (Bridgstock, 2009; M. Smith et al., 2018; Yorke, 2006) that suits the lifelong learning principle and justifies the necessity of different stakeholders involved, including students, teachers, institutions, professional networks, employers, and national policy and expertise (M. Smith et al., 2018).

In short, there have been several competing perspectives toward graduate employability. It is resulted from changes in government policies related to human resources development as well as personal differences. It suggests that underlying factors that instill stakeholders' perspectives toward graduate employability should be explored when implementing the graduate employability agenda in higher education. It is because stakeholders often translate what they believe about the agenda into their behavior. Without knowing their perspective, there may be misalignment in the execution of the employability agenda due to disharmonious perspectives.

Initiatives In and Outside the Curriculum to Develop Graduate Employability

Higher education institutions worldwide are under socio-economic, cultural, and political pressure that requires them to develop students' employability skills. In responses, it is observed that there have been several initiatives launched by HEIs to develop employability for students. They can be embedded into the curriculum, organized as co- or extra-curricular activities, guided at the workplace or within a community (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009; Jääskelä et al., 2018; Kinash et al., 2016; Tran, 2019). The subsequent paragraphs critically analyze different employability initiatives taken by higher learning providers around the world.

Capstone or Final-Semester Projects

Capstone or final-semester projects are designed for students to put theory into practice with real-client projects (Keller et al., 2011; Lee & Loton, 2019). They are found to contribute to developing students' employability and thus should be embedded into the curriculum (Keller et al., 2011; Lee & Loton, 2019). This advocates Campbell's et al. (2019) thoughts on "employability is no longer an 'add-on' to higher education, but a core part of a successful curriculum" (p. 503). Keller et al. (2011) research also revealed that the team-based, real-client model of the capstone is particularly useful as opposed to other capstone models "because it is especially effective at integrating the range of employability skills" (p. 4). However, capstone projects are a fairly new educational approach to enhance student employability in many disciplines, and it is more appropriate for use in some disciplines and others (Lee & Loton, 2019). Therefore, further research is warranted to further understand the impact of this strategy on increasing graduate employability (Kinash et al., 2016).

Work-Integrated Learning

Work-integrated learning (WIL) may be a popular initiative used to develop employability for students. It includes a variety of forms such as work experience, internships, placements, practicum, professional practice, industry-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative education, fieldwork education, among others (Oliver, 2015, p. 60). They are usually designed collaboratively with a host organization in the industry to provide students with experiential learning through which students can gain hands-on work experience (Irwin et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). These activities may "establish crucial bridges between formal education and future employment" (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 343). They afford interns opportunities to enrich their knowledge, apply what they have been studying, polish skills, develop a professional identity and identify career options (Tran & Nguyen, 2018; Wilton, 2012). Possibly due to these benefits, graduates with relevant internship experience are more likely to gain entry to an industry relevant to their fields of study more easily than those without (Tomlinson, 2017). However, there are a couple of notes that should be considered when designing WIL initiatives. First, this work-based learning often takes time for interns to "enhance the perception of self-worth and confidence in the labor market and shorter experience may be less effective in this regard" (Jackson & Wilton, 2017, p. 757). Second, internship experience can reduce unemployment chances when organized as multiple short-term internships (Silva et al., 2016) or paid internships in the final year of students' study (D. Jackson & Collings, 2018).

Student Career Services

Student careers services have been set up to help students plan their careers and facilitate their transition into the labor market. Activities organized by these services include, but are not limited to, developing Curriculum Vitae, assisting in interview skills, providing job information, career fairs information, and other labor market-relevant information (Chin et al., 2018). However, these services are often limited in their focus and mostly serve students who are graduating (Huang & Turner, 2018), although students should start developing employability skills much earlier in their educational program. Tomlinson (2017) suggests that university career practitioners should provide career counseling to students where they "impart their valuable knowledge on how to access particular fields of employment and build relations with employers" (p. 343). However, "careers advice can lead students astray if offered by universities in isolation from employers" (Kinash et al., 2016, p. 960). Therefore, these career services need to collaborate closely with employers or professionals to ensure that what they deliver is aligned with employers' needs.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Extra-curricular activities are referred to activities that are not part of the degree curriculum, such as sports, social groups and clubs, arts and music, and many more (Clark et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2013). These activities are acknowledged to be conducive to the development of employability. For example, Taiwanese business graduates reported improved communication, leadership, creativity, and self-promotion skills via participating in extra-curricular activities (Lau et al., 2014). Likewise, Lancaster University alumni recognized that their self-confidence and self-awareness were enhanced while playing sports, whereas joining social groups developed their interpersonal skills (Clark et al., 2015). As a result, evidence of engaging in extra-curricular activities can highlight employability in graduates' CVs and enhance their employment outcomes (Clark et al., 2015). However, students often overlook these extra-curricular activities, competed by time for formal education and part-time employment, or inadequate investment from the part of the institution (Tran, 2017).

Volunteering and Community Engagement

Whether paid or unpaid, volunteering or community engagement is observed as an integral activity to increase the employability of a student/graduate. Volunteering activities can foster the growth of resilience, moral engagement, and employability in students (Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010). These activities can improve graduates' employment prospects as they highlight the resume, open new career pathways and employment options as well as afford students opportunities to develop many employability skills (Baert & Vujić, 2018; Holdsworth, 2010). However, research also indicates that the contribution of volunteering activities on employment outcomes may not be very strong, unless the volunteering activities are aligned with what students' field of study (Paine et al., 2013). Therefore, students should be advised to carefully choose the most suitable among volunteer activities available.

International Exchanges

International exchanges are organized to meet employers' increasing demands of "graduates with the ability to operate in culturally diverse contexts" (Crossman & Clarke, 2010, p. 599). The Colombo Plan in Australia or the ERASMUS program in Europe was designed to encourage student mobility (Byrne, 2016; Jacobone & Moro, 2015). Despite low participation rates due to several causes, including financial issues, these exchange programs have positively developed students' employability, especially in terms of intercultural knowledge and skills (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). However, the influence of these programs on graduates' employment outcomes is mixed. Kinash et al. (2016) found that students and graduates who have participated in these exchanges admitted a lower employment possibility. In contrast, Crossman and Clarke (2010) found that employers do appreciate graduates with overseas experience as it supports "the development of cultural sensitivity and adaptability as well as enhancing graduate attractiveness in a globalized and internationalized labor market" (p. 609). Likewise, using the case of Italian students, Di Pietro (2015) found that participating in study abroad programs during their university studies significantly improved employment prospects for students from a disadvantaged background but unlikely for those from an advantaged background. Such mixed research results suggest that further investigations are needed to confirm our understanding of the effectiveness of using the international exchange as an initiative to develop students' employability.

Mentoring

Mentoring assists students to further understand the realities of a workplace. A United States study by Miller et al. (2016) suggests that peer-led models of professional mentorship better suit international students' needs to enhance their employability. Miller et al. (2016) further observed that peer mentoring is an effective measure to assist international students to adapt to the learning and living environment in the host country, addressing difficulties related to international students' visa issues, job searching, and job interview preparation. In Indian universities, pairing current students with alumni is also strategically organized to assist current students in developing their employability (Boregowda et al., 2018). Mentoring may also take place in a local business setting, linking students with local employers being the mentor, equipping them with knowledge and skills beneficial for the future career (C. Jacksonoccur Kerr, 2019; Spence & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2015). Although there are challenges such as the match between the mentor and mentee, the commitment of both sides, and the mentees' ability to learn (Spence & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2015), with careful planning, this initiative can provide a learning experience that "connects classroom learning to the real world" (Boregowda et al., 2018, p. 124).

Networking Events

Social capital is vital for employability (Tomlinson, 2017), and thus, networking events have been organized in many higher education institutions (Dickinson et al., 2015; Matlay & Rae, 2007). Attending networking or industry information events is one of the ways for students/graduates to interact with future employers and industry players to understand the mechanics of work and occupational opportunities (Dickinson et al., 2015; Pham et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). Participation in these networking events affords "meaningful and gainful interactions between graduates and employers" (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 343) and forge social network beneficial for their job hunting process subsequently. It can help students gain insights into employers' or recruiters' expectations, possibly including hidden expectations in their recruitment (Pham et al., 2019). As a result, it fosters graduates' transition into the labor markets. The two biggest challenges of this initiative are that it depends on the network with industries that institutions have and that students must be proactive in participating in such events to forge social networks for themselves.

Part-Time Employment

Working part-time while studying can increase students' awareness of their capabilities, personal qualities, work practices, and employers' expectations (D. Jackson & Wilton, 2017). For example, a comparative study with the participation of undergraduate business students from the United Kingdoms and Australia revealed that working part-time help students gain "a clearer understanding of which experiences are relevant, and why, and would have developed a larger network of employers contacts" (D. Jackson & Wilton, 2017, p. 757). Likewise, several studies have suggested that working part-time while studying helps students enrich their school lives and increase their social network (Wang et al., 2010). It also develops people skills, work skills, and personal attributes such as time management skills, interpersonal and communication skills, and confidence (Muldoon, 2009; Robotham, 2012). Research also found that employers often prioritize job applicants with concrete work experience (Evans et al., 2015; Muldoon, 2009). However, working part-time may also negatively affect students' academic performance, such as incompletion of assignments or low scores (Robotham, 2012; Salamonson et al., 2012). Therefore, this initiative should be used with caution.

Graduate Portfolio or Profile

Developing graduate profiles, portfolios, and records of achievement "represent(s) a collection of student work supporting and evidencing professional skills" (Kinash et al., 2016, p. 954) that can be demonstrated during the process of job application. It also provides students with opportunities to reflect upon their progress in building up their profile for future careers (Palmer et al., 2011). These reflective tools enable students to "not only record their achievements and activities but also to look within and understand their values and what is important to them" (D. Jackson & Tomlinson, 2019, p. 460). These reflections are important as employers emphasize personal and cultural fit with the organization (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011). Similar to graduate portfolio or profile, other tools such as skills audits, psychometric testing, and assessment centers help students understand their strengths and capabilities (D. Jackson & Tomlinson, 2019; Kinash et al., 2014). This initiative requires a high level of commitment and reflective learning from the part of the students.

Professional Membership

There is increasing recognition that professional association membership should be extended to students because it can help form students' initial professional identity (Fleming et al., 2011; S. Smith et al., 2014). Membership creates a sense of belonging in students; thus, they may develop their professional identity in alignment with that organization's expectations. Internship, work placement, practicum, fieldwork, etc., have been used popularly and reported to positively develop students' professional identity (D. Jackson, 2017; Tran & Huynh, 2017). The challenges are how to provide students with opportunities to become a member or feel a member of professional bodies or an organization.

Self-Presentation in Social Media

Social media savvy is also seen as one of the important strategies in enhancing graduates' career prospects. Developing an online profile building through LinkedIn or Facebook, or other social media channels benefits graduates in terms of widening their network for job opportunities (Escoffery et al., 2018; Pham et al., 2019), becoming more "visible to employers" and helping form "early bridging" with them (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 343). Those who can present themselves in social media are often "careerists" (see Tomlinson, 2007), portraying their image with their publications, achievements, and "joining conversations related to their field, and showing their positive attitudes" (Pham et al., 2019, p. 8). For these reasons, a positive image and presence in the virtual world may help graduates secure an employment position in real life. However, building such a personal brand in social media would require some technology skills, an investment of a long time, and consistent effort and comfortableness being online.

In short, there are various employability development initiatives implemented by higher learning institutions around the world. These initiatives are either organized within the curriculum, co-curriculum, extra-curriculum, or at the workplace to help students develop their employability, which is expected to enhance their employment outcomes and career development. It appears that such initiatives are dominantly skill-based or competency-based, with "skill" and "competency" being often used interchangeably despite possible differences in meaning (Curtis & McKenzie, 2001; Finch-Lees et al., 2005). Nevertheless, the skill-based approach is "narrow" and "does not fully capture the complexity of graduate work-readiness" (Jackson, 2016, p. 295). Such approaches may result in the development of graduates' skills/competencies, but these skills/competencies may not be transferred for application with flexibility across contexts. It is also observed that there is a lack of studies on why institutions adopt such initiatives and the experiences they had with implementing them in different contexts. Recent evidence further suggests that despite effort invested in developing employability for students, it has not improved much as employers have kept complaining about the work-readiness of recent graduates (Lindorff, 2011; Llorens et al., 2013; Tran, 2018). This can be due to ineffective implementation of the initiatives and/or issues related to graduates' translation of their employability into employment outcomes and career development. It seems that the relationship between employability and employment outcomes and career success may not be direct. The next section will discuss in great detail the translation of employability into employment outcomes and career advancement under the influence of personal and socio-economic factors.

The Translation of Graduate Employability into Employment Outcomes and Career Advancement

The current dominant skill-based or competency-based approach in implementing the employability agenda appears to assume that if students successfully develop skills or competencies delivered by a program, they will succeed in the labor market. However, it is unlikely to be the case. Recent studies have indicated that there is always a gap between the skills or competencies that graduates possess and what employers need (Clarke, 2018; Dhingra, 2018; Kulkarni et al., 2015). Likewise, many graduates with excellent average grade points (an important indicator of human capital) are found unnecessarily to land a better-paid or more important job position than those with a lower average grade point. These instances suggest that there are factors lying between graduates' employability and employment outcomes, and career success. If graduates fail to demonstrate their employability, they may not achieve the employment outcomes they deserve to get. In the following section, concepts and factors influencing the translation of employability into employment outcomes and career success will be discussed. Based on that, we develop a framework to illustrate how such concepts are related in the process of translating employability capital to employment outcomes and career advancement (Fig. 2.1).

Absolute Employability: The Package of Employability Capital

The first and most important factor that affects graduates' employment outcomes or career success is their accumulated employability capital. Through formal, informal, and non-formal learning, graduates are expected to have developed such capital at a level that meets employers' demands by the time of graduation. Despite differences in classifying such capital, the literature suggests that graduates not only need human capital (mostly manifest itself in forms of skills), they also need social capital (social network), cultural capital (embodied cultural asset or knowledge and skills about work culture), psychological capital (attributes that help them resilient, flexible and adaptable to different situations), and career identity (act as a compass to support their navigation in the labor market). The combination of all types of capital may make graduates successfully secure a job. This is often referred to as absolute employability (Brown et al., 2003). The absolute employability varies between graduates, even they study the same degree and at the same institution because each may be interested and invest in developing different types of employability capital. Those who have the capital that employers want the most will have better employment or career prospects than others. However, this absolute employability is not directly related to graduates' employment outcomes, but it depends much on factors such as the stability of the labor market, the number of graduates competing for a job position, the graduates' self-confidence, etc., which will be presented below.

Perceived Employability

After students have developed absolute employability and are ready to enter the labor market, their employment outcomes depend on how they perceived their employability within a specific labor market. Perceived employability is "the individual's perception of his or her possibilities of obtaining and maintaining employment" (Vanhercke et al., 2014, p. 593). It refers to the personal evaluation and the perceptions of employment possibilities based upon the evaluation of the interaction between personal factors and structural/contextual factors (Vanhercke et al., 2014). Perceived employability is both internal and external. Internal perceived employability is perceptions of knowledge, skills, abilities, and job search, while external perceived employability relates to perceptions of such factors as demand for expertise, institutional prestige, and the overall labor market conditions (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2017). Vanhercke et al. (2015) found that perceived employability is the function of cognitions (perceiving employment possibilities), changing behavior (getting more involved in job search based upon perceptions), and psychological functioning (feeling worth employment). It is influenced by academic performance, co-curricular activity participation, and many other factors (Donald et al., 2018; Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017). According to Vanhercke et al. (2015), if employees perceive themselves as employable, they keep focusing on developing more resources such as knowledge, skills, networks, etc., to make themselves even more employable. Perceived employability is therefore very critical in the transition to work (Vanhercke et al., 2014) because it enhances the individual's capacity to translate employability into employment outcomes.

Graduates' Psychological Factors

Several psychological factors determine the employment outcomes and career success of graduates. First, human capital includes dispositions, knowledge, skills, and other characteristics that are developed under a cognitive-affective processing system, so they should be considered to be psychological factors (Kell et al., 2018). In conceptualizing employability as a psycho-social construct, Fugate et al. (2004) argue that these human capital indicators are embedded in career identity, a psychological dimension, so human capital also evolves as a psychological factor that shapes employability and influences employment outcomes.

Career identity is the self-definition of employees in a career context. It has a cognitive-affective nature that blends the individual characteristics of human capital (Fugate et al., 2004). It directs career decision-making and gives the individual the motivation to follow the chosen professional trajectory (Fugate et al., 2004), McArdle et al. (2007) propose that a strong career identity (with being proactive and adaptable) can prevent the loss of self-esteem during unemployment. Self-esteem results from reflection and evaluation of oneself given one's career development learning, work and life experience, degree subject human capital, generic skills, and emotional intelligence (Pool & Sewell, 2007; Small et al., 2018). Together with self-efficacy, which is the belief in one's ability to do and achieve something specifically (Vanhercke et al., 2014), self-esteem enhances employability (Small et al., 2018).

Career adaptability refers to the ability to harness and employ psychological resources to make changes in the self and adapt to career situations (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). It can help people address work assignments, build resilience, increase job satisfaction and contribute to career success. Career adaptability helps people (pro)actively change to suit themselves to the working environment (Fugate et al., 2004). Adaptable people are characterized by optimism, propensity to learn, openness, internal locus of control (the belief that events around one can be controlled), and self-efficacy (Tomlinson, 2017). Career adaptability is positively related to hope, optimism, and resilience (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). In Tomlinson's (2017) view, the psychological capital includes not only adaptability but also resilience, self-efficacy, and flexibility. These psychological qualities have been found to help graduates better navigate the labor market, cope with setbacks, overcome challenges, and maintain positivity throughout.

Graduates' Ability to Demonstrate Employability

Not many studies have investigated the contribution of graduates' ability to demonstrate their employability to their employment outcomes. However, existing studies have indicated that such an ability can affect their success in being shortlisted or securing a job. Even when students have a high level of absolute and perceived employability plus the support of psychological attributes, all may collapse if they do not demonstrate the employability effectively. The organization of information put in the CV/resume, the graphic design of documents submitted, the voice and tone in the cover letter, etc. all signify the capital that graduates have and determine whether a job applicant can be called for an interview (Cole et al., 2007). Likewise, if they are shortlisted to be invited for a job interview, how they appear, sound and look can also affect the employers' hiring decision. Many studies suggest that if applicants do not present themselves professionally at the interview, they are more likely to fail, even when they are qualified (Bruton, 2015; Kaufmann et al., 2017; Patacchini et al., 2015). While it is difficult to predict employers' specific preference of an ideal employee, there are common things that graduates should demonstrate, such as communication skills, appropriate outfits, confidence, assertiveness, and a committed attitude to the job position. All of these can be improved with regular practice.

Market Factors

In neoliberal economics, the market factors that affect employability boil down to the principle of supply and demand (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). As employability is often considered as how graduates enter the labor market as a process (Holmes, 2013), the demand side has received increasing attention in recent discussions about employability (Comyn, 2018; Okolie et al., 2019; M. Smith et al., 2018). Economically, the demand side (i.e., aggregate demand) is associated with the number of jobs available in the labor market; yet, several other factors, discussed in the next paragraphs, influence job availability in a specific labor market.

First, economic integration can increase graduates' employment outcomes. In the global economy, economic integration predicts the number of jobs across labor markets, and this in turn predicts how easy or difficult graduates obtain employment. For example, the number of skill-based jobs is projected to increase by 41% in ASEAN member countries from 2020 to 2025 after the founding of the Asian Economic Community (Comyn, 2018). This presents an optimistic picture for graduates from within the block as the labor market expands across member countries. Simultaneously, the competition will become intense as they will compete for jobs with graduates of all ASEAN and possibly graduates from developed countries, not just with the same nationality graduates.

Second, there is always more demand in some industries or sectors than others. Between 1980 and 2015, 60% of 50 million new job titles were created in the US thanks to technological advances (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2018). This has increased demand for highly-skilled workers in the technical, managerial, and professional fields that characterize the knowledge-based economy (Brown et al., 2003). The reality is that jobs have not been created evenly across domains, which positively affects the employability of one group but negatively affects that of the other. A recent study by Donald et al. (2018) shows that due to the number of jobs (un)available in the labor market, UK students feel more employable with a degree in engineering but less with a degree in art.

Employment prospect also changes to economic cycles. A study by Berntson et al. (2006) shows that people's perceived employability decreases during economic downturns but increases during economic prosperity. Before the economy reaches its full potential, this delays the expansion of goods and services production and jobs, and such changes culminate in weaker demand for labor in all sectors or a certain sector. In such a context, employability is affected for all, but those who have more diverse qualities (Small et al., 2018) and more attractive qualities such as strong career identity and personal/career adaptability (Fugate et al., 2004; Hartung & Cadaret, 2017; McArdle et al., 2007) will realize more possibilities of employment.

Employers' Preferences

Discussion about employers' preferences in making hiring decisions can begin with Roth and Sotomayor's (1992) two-sided matching concept. Contextualized their study in cases of PhD graduates, they viewed that obtaining jobs is a product of the preference matching between employers and PhD graduates. It takes place on the condition of discretion and stability. In reality, employers usually require a range of graduate attributes (Smith et al., 2018). However, graduates do not generally meet all their requirements, resulting in employers' lament of graduates' skills gap (Lindorff, 2011; Llorens et al., 2013; Succi & Canovi, 2019; Tran, 2018). Employers' preferences can be interpreted as an issue of acceptability (Brown & Scase, 2005) and desirability (Hogan et al., 2013). Acceptability is associated with class and culture (Brown & Scase, 2005), meaning that those with more cultural capital are preferred (Aziz, 2015; Brown et al., 2003). Desirability is associated with graduates' ability to do the job, willingness to work hard, and worthiness to deal with (Hogan et al., 2013). Employers' preferences reflect their own perspectives, which are shaped by different factors from traditions to biases, initial signals, private learning, public learning, and so on (Cai, 2013).

In short, upon graduation, graduates will not be employed automatically, as it requires them to compete with other candidates and effectively demonstrate that they have all the stakes employers need. We call it the process of translating employability into employment outcomes/career advancement (Fig. 2.1). As discussed earlier, this process is often affected by several factors stemming from graduates, the employers, and the labor market. Graduates possess a package of employability consisting of several types of employability capital. Depending on their own confidence and self-assessment of their employability in relation to market factors, they hold a view of their own employability prospects, named perceived employability. Using this perceived employability, graduates apply for jobs that they believe to be more likely to succeed. The employment outcomes depend much on how they demonstrate their capital to prospective employers, their ability to manage their psychological attributes, the employers; preferences and labor market stability. Their career

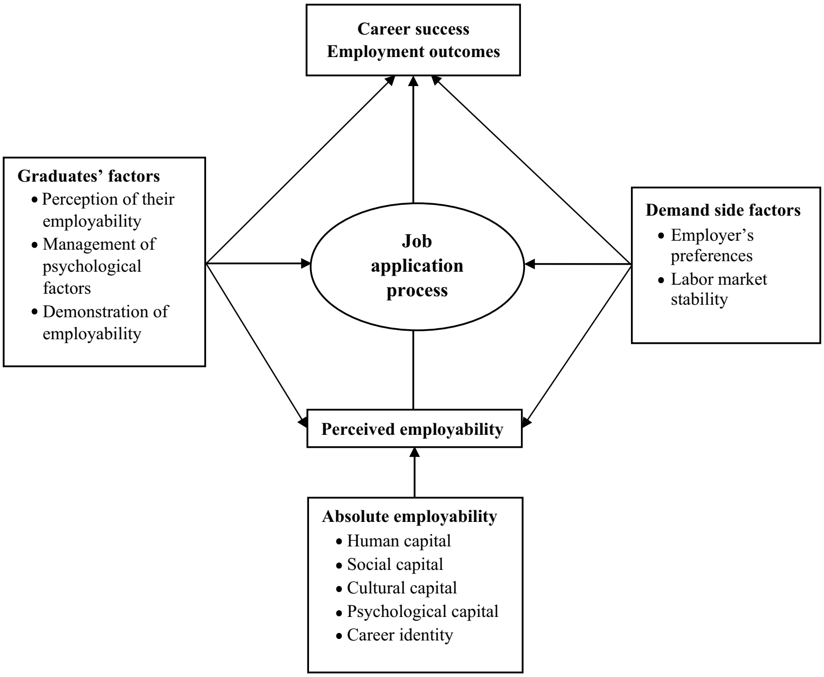
Career success
Employment outcomes
Graduates' factors
Perception of their employability
Management of psychological factors
Demonstration of employability
Job application process
Demand side factors
Employer's preferences
Labor market stability
Perceived employability
Absolute employability
Human capital
Social capital
Cultural capital
Psychological capital
Career identity

Fig. 2.1 From employability to employment outcomes and career advancement

advancement is a higher stage after successfully securing jobs and fulfilling their personal needs of who they want to be and what they want to achieve.

It is observed that the current literature about graduate employability has not adequately investigated such a translation process as well the effectiveness of their employability programs currently executed. There is a great body of literature on career development; yet such a translation stage is also under-investigated. As such, this will also be a fertile ground for our book to cultivate so that more insights can be generated, contributing to bridging the literature gap between graduate employability and career development.

Conclusion

Employability has been actively studied in the past decades as one of the most trending topics after career success and career decision-making in higher education research (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017). When it is true that job seekers' relative position affects their employability, a common concern is the dissimilar preparation among graduates for and in the labor market. Better preparation will make graduates more competitive, so the employability agenda should start from college, or even earlier, through the implementation of curricula, co-curricular and extra-curricular initiatives. Recently, there have been several research projects examining the perspectives of and initiatives to develop employability for students; however, there is a lack of studies into graduates' transitioning to work and career development. Examining the transitioning and career development will enable us to understand and improve the effectiveness of the employability development initiatives, contributing to our students'/graduates' career success. Career development beyond the exit point of higher education is also part of graduates' employability because in the current constantly changing labor market, one will not stay with one job for the whole life. Graduates must be able to continuously build and use different types of capital to sustain their employability. This concept of employability as a lifelong process will be adopted as the guideline for the development of this book project.

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Chapter 3
Using Bourdieu's Concepts of Social Field, Habitus, and Capital for Employability-Related Research

Binh Chi Bui and Tran Le Huu Nghia

Abstract Several studies have reported the implementation of similar graduate employability development initiatives across contexts. However, the experiences with the implementation varied. This suggests the necessity to explore factors behind the adoption and execution of these initiatives in different contexts, be it a higher education system, institution, or discipline. In this chapter, the authors present Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus, and capital as well as related concepts by other authors to set a theoretical framework that can be used to effectively understand perspectives and initiatives to develop and translate graduate employability to employment outcomes and career success. We argue that the three concepts combined provide a useful theoretical lens for graduate employability-related research. They better address the complexity of graduate employability, extend the employability research beyond the exit point of higher education, align with the notion of lifelong learning professional development, and support the shared responsibility approach to execution of the graduate employability agenda.

Introduction

Higher education is an investment venture that has attracted the attention of many stakeholders. Human capital related theories posit that the higher educational level one attains, the more prosperous they may become. Under the influence of human capital theories, families have relied on higher education to help their children climb to the middle class (Thelin, 2019); employers increasingly target to recruit highly skilled graduates (Clarke, 2018); and governments pressure institutions to generate a productive workforce to contribute to economic growth (Ball, 2009; Clarke, 2018; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). As a result, higher education sectors have witnessed a

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remarkable expansion (Trow, 2010; Wu & Hawkins, 2018; Yang, 2018). The past decades have witnessed rising concerns about higher education massification that culminates in increased competition for jobs among graduates (Tomlinson, 2012; Yang, 2018). Let us assume that human capital investment can enhance graduates' knowledge, skills, and attitudes—a package often referred to as graduate employability. However, this package may be absolute and subjective (Brown et al., 2003; Vanhercke et al., 2014; Veld et al., 2015). To obtain employment, graduates need to compete against other job applicants in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other attributes that meet employers' demands. Thus, completing higher education does not guarantee employment outcomes.

Since graduate employability has become an important indicator of higher education quality (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005), different researchers have started employing Bourdieu's concepts of social capital, habitus, and capital and relevant concepts as a theoretical framework to understand employability-related issues (e.g., Clark & Zukas, 2013; Clark et al., 2011; Clarke, 2018; Holmes, 2013; Reay, 2004; Tomlinson, 2017). What is lacking is that researchers have not adequately employed the concepts to explain the complex relations between the forms of capital, the graduates' habitus, and the social field that shapes the development and utilization of graduate employability for employment outcomes (Clark et al., 2011). Failing to take it into account will turn the employability agenda in unexpected directions.

In this chapter, we will present Bourdieu's concepts of social field and habitus and capital as well as relevant concepts by other authors and explain how these concepts can be utilized to research employability-related issues. We argue that Bourdieusian social field, habitus, and perspectives on capital can be used as a useful theoretical lens to refresh our viewpoints and approach to researching employability in relation to lifelong learning, "a guiding principle of a democratic learning society" (Elfert, 2019, p. 539). The chapter presents a master framework to understand what and why stakeholders hold different perspectives toward, engage with, and utilize employability for their career development presented in the subsequent chapters of this book.

Bourdieu's Social Field, Habitus, and Capital

Social Field and Habitus

The field is a social space, the social world or social structure dictated by forces (e.g., class, religion, etc.) possessed by individuals who may be dominant and dominated. It is "the field of class relations" (Bourdieu, 2020, p. 220). The field includes forces that determine the structure of agents' habitus, turning habitus into a structured structure of dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977). The field and the forces that construct the field continuously influence and modify habitus. In turn, the field is also affected and structured by the habitus. When the field and habitus match, "everything seems natural, the world is self-evident, you feel entirely at home" (Bourdieu, 2020, p. 259) or feel like a "fish in water" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). A perfect match of the field and habitus is, however, never factual.

Habitus is a system of long-lasting and reversible dispositions (e.g., perceptions, behaviors, styles) of agents influenced by their environment and personal history (Bourdieu, 1977). Specifically, it is associated with agents' past experiences through the process of living, being raised, and being educated. This system of dispositions reflects the embodiment of the field in it and shapes human agency (Power, 1999). Usually, agents in the field "will act as they ought to act in order to avoid conflict with the social world" (Bourdieu, 2020, p. 125). However, although not going through discourse or consciousness, the development of habitus is not a mechanical or trial-and-error (Bourdieu, 1977). In case of significant changes in the field, it becomes more reflexive and conscious, and agents will use different actions and strategies as (social) practices to respond to what happens in the field. These practices or representations are a human agency. It gives force to "all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 95), which reflects "a well-developed habitus" (Reay, 2004, p. 438). Given the rising of agency, the field will become the field of struggles in which human agency can best display itself (Hurtado, 2010). As such, human agency functions as the structuring structure of practices, which is the result of the relation between habitus, field, and forms of capital (Power, 1999).

Forms of Capital

Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus, and capitals are drawn from the ideas of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Merleau-Ponty (Reay, 2004). Habitus is part of the capital incorporated and inseparable from holders; capital is part of the field's organizing force (Bourdieu, 2020). Owing to this interdependence, capitals, habitus, and the field should not be analyzed in separation (Hurtado, 2010). In his elaboration on forms of capital, Bourdieu (1986) distinguished between four forms of capital: economic capital, social capital, cultural capital, and symbolic capital, all of which are accumulated over time to produce benefits and to reproduce itself in a form similar or expanded.

Economic capital is materials that are "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). In this definition, Bourdieu (1986) refers to economic capital as the resources that can be used to produce economic values. Pinxten and Lievens' (2014) interpret it as material resources such as financial resources, land resources, and so on. This capital is also the material resources that are used for educational processes (i.e., education costs), and in turn, it is enhanced by education in terms of market outcomes (i.e., wages and compensations). As such, economic capital is one of three components in understanding students' socio-economic status (SES): parents' education, income, and occupational status (Patton et al., 2016). Together with other forms of capital, economic capital establishes one's social position (Pinxten & Lievens, 2014).

Cultural capital can exist in the embodied state, objectified state, and institutionalized state (Bourdieu, 1986). In the embodied state, cultural capital is a cognitive structure of knowledge and skills (Clark & Zukas, 2013; Nash, 1990) and dispositions and behaviors (Tomlinson, 2017) of particular agential groups through familial inculcation and investment. The embodiment of cultural capital is seen through its non-transmissibility (Aziz, 2015) as an integral part of agents at economic capital expense (Bourdieu, 1986, 2020). Cultural capital in this state often concentrates in educational settings in the form of students' knowledge, skills, and behavioral dispositions (Bourdieu, 1974; Nash, 1990). Bourdieu's postulation of cultural capital suggests that this form of capital is long associated with students' SES before mobilizing and sorting in school education systems. The objectified state of cultural capital can be a writing, a painting, and the like. In this state, it is transmissible and owned by someone in the form of a copyright. The institutionalized state of this cultural capital is the copyright of such mentioned works and can also be the diploma conferred by an institution. With the institutionalized state, cultural capital is often assigned with a value that is economic and power-related (Everett, 2002). For this economic and power-related value assignment, cultural capital contributes to the reproduction of unequal social structures as the fields of cultural production (Bourdieu, 2020) and cultural reproduction (Aziz, 2015; Nash, 1990).

Social capital is defined by Bourdieu (1986) as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 248). This network of relationships is important due to the size of the network and the volume or strength of the social capital (see also Higgins & Kram, 2001; Seibert et al., 2001) that exerts influence on professional and personal outcomes. People in a network continuously exchange recognized knowledge, values, materials, etc. that may be different for some individuals but typical of their network. Social capital is closely related to cultural capital because social capital represents individuals' position or, in some social spheres, the title of nobility that is enhanced by cultural capital. How easy to obtain a position depends on how much loss during the transmission of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Symbolic capital is associated with any other forms of capital that is recognized and acknowledged and has a value in such recognition and acknowledgment (Bourdieu (1986). The symbolic form may be exemplified by the competence of an individual who is a professor (teachers), among other examples. Although competence refers to cultural capital, it is symbolic because it is recognized and has a value (i.e., he/she is competent) in the culture where he/she functions.

Relevant Concepts to Social Field, Habitus, and Capital

The relationship between the fields and habitus could be highlighted by the concepts of beliefs and behaviors studied in different fields and subfields of research. In the theory of planned behavior, actions or behaviors are associated with intentions.

The stronger intentions, the more likely people perform the intended behaviors (Ajzen, 2020). According to Ajzen (2020), intentions are primarily determined by three factors—attitudes toward behaviors, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. These factors are related to people's beliefs, i.e., behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and accessible control beliefs. Ajzen (2020) noted that different internal and environmental factors moderated the influence of intentions on behaviors and referred to these as actual control factors. For example, in educational micropolitics, researchers found that during school change, the change in working conditions for teachers does not suit teachers' knowledge and beliefs (Kelchtermans, 1993). These subjective viewpoints (knowledge and beliefs) enable them to make sense of things and work as indicators of their professional development. When teachers see the changes discrepant from what they know and believe in, they feel the changes harmful to their professional development and use actions against these changes to defend them (Bui, 2013; Kelchtermans, 1993). Micropolitics researchers refer to these actions as micropolitical actions or micropolitical behaviors (Bui, 2013; Kelchtermans, 2007). Thus, educational micropolitics studies suggest that people act and behave according to their subjective system. Because of this, when the environment changes and differs from their subjective system, they act and behave accordingly. The relation between people's beliefs and behaviors under the influence of environmental factors exemplifies Bourdieu's (1977, 2020) postulation of the relationship between the social field and one's habitus.

As for capital, researchers have different perspectives on categories of capital and employability capital. While Bourdieu (1986) distinguished between four related forms of capital, Tomlinson (2017) developed five types of capital—human capital, cultural capital, social capital, psychological capital, and identity capital. Even discussing under the same terms such as human capital, researchers may have different meanings and definitions. For example, Bourdieu (1974, 1986) and some other researchers (e.g., Clark & Zukas, 2013; Nash, 1990) referred to cultural capital as dispositions, knowledge, skills, and so on. By contrast, Tomlinson (2017), in his employability capital model, viewed the graduates' knowledge and skills as human capital and cultural capital in terms of dispositions, knowledge, and skills aligned with the tradition and practice in the workplace of an industry or organization. It is also realized that many researchers appear to prioritize some type of capital over others in their employability research. Regardless of terminologies, research acknowledges the impact of such capital on graduate employability and calls for a continuation on examining such an impact in different contexts.

The Use of Bourdieu's Concepts and Relevant Concepts in Employability-Related Research

Bourdieu's Capital and Relevant Concepts in Employability-Related Research

Human capital, which refers to graduates' knowledge and skills (Tomlinson, 2017), appeared to be adopted the most in research about employability. Numerous studies have attempted to identity knowledge, skills, and attributes that enhance graduate employability using students', graduates', academics', and employers' perspectives (Brunner et al., 2018; Chowdhury & Miah, 2016; Succi & Canovi, 2019). These studies have resulted in a list of skills that should be developed for students, despite disparities between these lists. This line of research appeared to be driven by the dominant perspective of employability as possession of skills adopted in higher education (Holmes, 2013) and itself further contributed to the existence of such a perspective. Following that, there are studies reporting the process of embedding such skills into the curriculum, methods to deliver and assess such skills via the curriculum and co-curricular, or forms of work-integrated learning. This is where contextual factors and especially economic capital, defined as the input of educational processes and also the market outcomes of these process, are analyzed to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009; Tran, 2019, 2017a, 2017b). Altogether has resulted in the skill-based or competency-based approach to executing the graduate employability agenda in higher education until now.

Likewise, cultural capital and social capital are also adopted to explain employability. According to Tomlinson (2017), cultural capital is the knowledge, embodied behaviors, distinction, and symbolic values that enable graduates to better behave and adapt to organizations and different working contexts. This research line is often considered the issue of culture-fit of graduates to the culture of an organization, an industry, or a labor market (Dietz et al., 2015; Pham et al., 2019; Rivera, 2012). Social capital influences graduates' employability through networks, relationships, contacts, acquaintance, contacts, and recognition (Clarke, 2018; Fugate et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2017). Social capital is also characterized by social class and institutional types that influence employability (Clarke, 2018). Several studies have investigated individuals' employability from different social backgrounds, explaining disparities of their employment outcomes or career success in terms of social status and associated privileges (Dustmann et al., 2010; John & Carnoy, 2019). Another stream of research looks into the impact of social networks on graduates' transitioning into the labor market (Benson et al., 2014; Gayen et al., 2010). However, mixed results in this stream of research provoke further exploration to confirm our understanding in this regard.

Psychological capital such as resilience, adaptability, flexibility is also found in the literature, especially for those at the early stage of their career (Ahmad et al., 2017).

This stream of research is often associated with personal agency and career identity. This line of research, notably, appears to change higher education stakeholders' viewpoint about graduate employability, moving from seeing it as a possession of skills to seeing it as a process or as a project of identity construction (Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2016). An initial career identity will help students develop different types of capital to support them to realize the desired identity (Jackson, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017). During their career, they may change jobs several times, even working in different labor markets; therefore, the career identity also evolves and direct them to further develop capital in that direction. As a result of a continuously evolving identity, their employability capital also grows.

Bourdieu's Social Field and Habitus and Relevant Concepts in Employability-Related Research

Some researchers have also used Bourdieusian concepts of social field and habitus, or related concepts such as socio-cultural factors, structural factors, organizational culture, and personal factors to examine issues related to the employability agenda. Generally, these studies help provide a deeper understanding of how and why people act within a specific context to achieve employability goals.

In Tran's (2019) project, he found that the social-cultural and political factors affect the selection of skills to develop for Vietnamese university students. Driven by the Vietnamese government policy document, English and computer skills are considered soft skills in the country, whereas computer skills can be viewed as technical skills in other contexts. Also, in implementing the employability agenda, several studies suggested that the social field also affects stakeholders' attitudes and behaviors to the agenda. For example, the university culture that values academic freedom and leadership issues has resulted in academics' disengagement from teaching generic graduate attributes (Barrie et al., 2009; de la Harpe & David, 2012; Jones, 2009; Tran, 2017b). In Vietnam, the universities adopted extra-curricular activities as the primary channel to develop employability skills for students because a lack of curriculum and institutional autonomy prevent them from delivering such skills within the curriculum (Tran, 2017a). In Finland, Jääskelä et al. (2018) found that several structural factors affected the development of models to develop generic skills for students: (i) the task of higher education in relation to the world of work, (ii) responsibilities for workplace relations in education, (iii) management and (iv) networks with industries. Moreover, regarding the translation of employability to employment outcomes and career success, by Tran, Pham et al. (2020) and Tran, Rahimi, et al. (2020) in a recent book project used graduates' reflection to understand how graduates built and used different forms of capital for their career development across labor markets. The project showed that the labor markets acted as social fields that affected their build and use of the capital for their career development. Specifically for the case of international graduates, Coffey et al. (2018) pointed out that the Australian labor market discriminates against international graduates. L. T. Tran et al. (2020), Tran, Rahimi, et al. (2020) further showed that the market did not work to international graduates' advantages due to the post-study visa policies and employers' bias against these graduates.

Likewise, many studies also show that stakeholders' habitus affects their approach to and engagement with the employability agenda. Regarding selecting employability skills to develop for students, Pitman and Broomhall's (2009) study showed that the selection of such skills among Australian universities was affected by the institutional types, with its distinctive missions and visions. This type of collective habitus really shapes the employability agenda execution because the chosen skills are influential on the approaches adopted to develop those skills for students. At the personal level, many academics believed that their roles are not for preparing students for employment but to cultivate their students' minds to become highly intellectual ones (Jones, 2009; Tran, 2017b). However, some empirical evidence suggests that with leadership and management, academics can change their attitudes toward and behavioral engagement with the agenda (Tran, 2019). In the case of students, the academic culture that excessively focuses on grades appears to cause them to focus on in-class activities and disregard extra-curricular activities (Tran, 2017c), which help develop several skills beneficial for their future careers (Tran, 2017a, 2017c). Whereas most studies about graduates' employment outcomes attribute their employment to inadequate preparation of career-readiness either on students or the university, research also addresses how habitus facilitated or challenged graduates to translate their employability into employment outcomes. For example, in Tran, Pham et al. (2020), Tran, Rahimi, et al. (2020), graduates exercised personal agency to cope with challenges, build up new skills, polish their existing employability capital, and use flexible strategies to look for and adapt to new work opportunities. Personal agency, psychological factors, and a career identity appeared to support this process a great deal. In L. T. Tran et al. (2020), Tran, Rahimi, et al. (2020) study above, although being disadvantaged in the Australian labor market, many international graduates succeeded in securing their employment due to their resilience in further building employability capital (skills, network, English proficiency). All of these studies suggest that stakeholders' habitus, i.e., their way of thinking and acting within a specific context, plays a vital role in shaping graduates' employability, and it can be a useful theoretical lens to research employability-related issues.

In fact, some researchers (e.g., Clark et al., 2011; Tholen, 2015; Thondhlana, 2020) have specifically adopted Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus, and capital to examine the career development of graduates. For example, in their three-year study, Clark et al. (2011) and Clark and Zukas (2013) studied how IT undergraduates transitioned into the workplace. The authors found that graduates' employability capital and their habitus affected whether they could obtain jobs and succeed in the transitioning process. Clark and Zukas (2013) then analyzed the importance of individual positions and dispositions, workplace culture and organization, and the social contacts to graduate employability. They found that some graduates without an IT culture-fit struggled in their job and career development because they were not a "fish in water," as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) described the match between one's habitus and the social field. Although this study emphasized the match between the graduate and the work environment, it does not examine how graduates' habitus changes in the work environment, being the social field, and the inextricability between the capital forms (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) and with habitus and the field. Besides, the study conducted by Thondhlana (2020) showed that Zimbabwean participants in this study accepted to be in a low social class, tolerating bad life conditions as migrants in the UK. At the same time, they exercise personal agency, adapted to the new life, and resiliently pursued further education to gain a degree, among other initiatives, and finally landed highly skilled jobs.

In short, researchers have used Bourdieu's concepts of social, habitus, and capital and related concepts of other authors to examine specific issues related to the employability agenda. Some only adopted the capital concepts; some adopted a mix between habitus and capital or habitus and the social field; and others utilized all three concepts to study employability. However, we found that using the concepts separately and only looking into one aspect of employability, instead of seeing it as an ongoing process, fail to explain the interaction between forms of capital, graduates' (changing) habitus, and the influence of the social field on their behaviors/habitus when they translate the capital into employment outcomes or career advancement. It appears that combining all three concepts may provide a useful tool to holistically investigate employability-related issues.

The Use of Bourdieu's Social Field, Habitus, and Capital Concepts in This Book

The section above reported research that adopted Boudieusian concepts of social field, habitus, and capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986, 2020). It showed that the three concepts have proven an effective theoretical lens for employability research. It also identified that these concepts have not often been used together to holistically understand the whole process from developing employability capital to translating it into employment outcomes and career advancement. In this section, we will explain how we will use the three concepts together as a theoretical ground for this book project and how it can contribute to graduate employability-related research.

In this book, capital is simply understood as the resources that students/graduates possess or have access to in making themselves more employable; habitus is the way students/graduates think, strategize and act to develop their employability capital and translate it into employment outcomes; and social field is the context in which students/graduates function around employability (e.g., develop the capital or translate it into employment outcomes). We adopt all three concepts—employability capital, social field, and habitus—coined by Bourdieu and expanded by his successors to investigate three themes of employability-related research, which will be reported in Parts 2, 3, and 4 of this book. Respectively, they are (i) different higher education stakeholders' views about employability, (ii) their engagement with employability capital development initiatives, and (iii) how graduates translate the capital into employment outcomes in different labor markets and at different stages of their careers. Although the prominence of each of the three concepts varies between studies reported in chapters of this book, they are present in each study.

It should be noted that in this book, there will be two layers of analysis. The first layer occurs within each empirical chapters reported in Parts 2, 3, and 4. It is where the authors will examine viewpoints, initiatives to develop employability capital and the translation of employability into employment outcomes in different contexts (e.g., disciplines, institutions, higher education system, and labor markets). Not all authors will use the three concepts as the theoretical lens for analyzing the data of their studies, but they may discuss the findings in light of the three concepts. They may not use the terms "capital," "social field" and "habitus" in their chapters but "resources," "contextual factors" or "behaviors" instead, which are still aligned well with Bourdieu's and his successors' concepts. The second layer of analysis occurs in the last chapter of this book where the editorial team adopts the three concepts to perform a meta-analysis of the empirical chapters. Using these studies as data, we analyze to bring to light the complexities of employability as the results of dynamic interactions between the capital, social, and habitus with which higher education stakeholders are associated. Using the three concepts capital, social field, and habitus as a theoretical lens, we contribute to graduate employability-related research in the following dimensions.

First, using Bourdieu's three concepts in graduate employability research, we can better capture the complexity of graduate employability, instead of seeing it as having essential skillsets (Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2016). Employability depends not only on cognitive schemata but also several other factors such as social capital, market conditions, and so on (Clarke, 2018). Therefore, employability should be conceptualized as a process of continuously developing their capacity to perform jobs throughout their career (Bridgstock, 2009; Yorke, 2006). During this process, graduates keep negotiating, confirming, and disconfirming their graduate identity to be employable (Holmes, 2013). They also need to have a substantial career identity and proactively adapt to the constant changes the world of work presents to them (Bridgstock, 2009; Fugate et al., 2004; Hartung & Cadaret, 2017), self-manage their career (Bridgstock, 2009; Römgens et al., 2019), among other practices, to maximize their employability. Given all these practices, graduates/employees always adjust their thinking and behaviors (i.e., their habitus) to further build their capital while participating in the labor market (being a social field). Such complex development of employability capital cannot be examined without understanding the graduates' habitus and the field in which they function.

Second, using Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus, and capital in combination, we can highlight the process of the translation of employability into employment outcomes. Current employability research often views employability in an absolute sense (Brown et al., 2003), but in reality, employability-in-use is considered in a relative sense (Brown et al., 2003). In the labor market, whether graduates can translate their employability into employment outcomes depends on (i) graduates' abilities to demonstrate their employability capital to prospective employers, and (ii) several market factors, including employers' preferences. Therefore, on top of market-related factors, the way they think, act as well as use capital and resources available to them also contributes to their success in translating their employability capital into employment outcomes (Tholen, 2015; Thondhlana, 2020). Obviously, the translation of employability capital into employment outcomes, and career advancement in a later stage, is closely connected with their own habitus and the social field they choose to step into. Thus, to understand this translation process, it is impossible without examining the interactions between graduates' employability capital, their habitus, and the field of the labor market they enter.

Third, using Bourdieusian concepts, we can depict graduates' lifelong process—with different phases—of career development. Thus, this enables to investigate the employability agenda beyond the exit point of higher education and links it to professional development. Within the current volatile and uncertain world, knowledge and skills quickly become outdated, so lifelong learning through different modes—formal, non-formal, informal—(Merriam et al., 2006) is necessary for professional development. Lifelong learning reflects human agency (i.e., part of habitus) to cope with challenges, changes, and uncertainties in the workplace or labor market (i.e., the social field). Lifelong learning helps employees accumulate new capital that enables them to address unforeseen issues, both in the workplace and personal life, to work more productively, become more competitive within the field they are working or even move away toward a new domain of work. As such, at different phases of their career development, they may have different types of capital, the way they use such capital and strategies to be employable, and even fits well into a new social field where they will work toward their self-fulfillment.

Finally, as Bourdieu's concepts are related to lifelong learning, they support the view that the implementation of the graduate employability agenda needs a shared responsibility approach. Developing graduate employability is not the sole responsibility of either student, the university, or the employer, but it should be of all because it is a lifelong process. Employability capital develops in different social fields: home, school, university, workplace, and the society at large, from birth to death. As such, families invest in education and teach their children at home to function well in the future. Schools and the university equip them with updated knowledge, skills, and attributes relevant to the workplace. Students/Graduates seek and engage with all learning opportunities to continuously upgrade their employability capital for employment outcomes enhancement and career success. Employers should also create favorable conditions for their employees to develop new skills and polish their expertise via ongoing professional development activities, which will result in improved work effectiveness or productivity. These showed the influence of different social fields on the formation of graduates' habitus and employability capital. It also suggests that developing graduate employability for students is a shared responsibility of different stakeholders (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Therefore, Bourdieu's concepts of social and habitus and capital as well as related concepts proposed by recent authors (still largely based on Bourdieu's concept of capital) will fit nicely to supporting this shared responsibility approach to the execution of the employability agenda.

Conclusion

Effective implementation of the employability agenda in response to pressure placing on higher education needs an appropriate theoretical framework to understand employability as a complex construct. However, researchers in the area of graduate employability have not developed a theoretical framework that can explain the complexity of graduate employability in the current labor market full of turbulence. To this end, the current chapter has presented Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus, and capital as well as a number of concepts of other authors in relation to employability. We argue that the social field, habitus, and capital are related referents, and they together can provide an appropriate theoretical lens to research employability-related issues. The three concepts together can explain the complexity of graduate employability; it extends graduate employability beyond the graduation to include their career development process; it aligns with the notion of lifelong learning as effective professional development strategies; and it supports a shared responsibility approach to graduate employability development. The combination of these concepts will be used as the theoretical lens for understanding perspectives, initiatives to develop graduate employability, and the translation of it to employment outcomes and career development in this book project.

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Part II
Perspectives Toward Graduate Employability

Chapter 4
Academic Perspectives of the Skills That Business Graduates in Australia Would Need: The Case of Victoria-Based Universities

Thi Tuyet Be and Iffat Khatoon

Abstract This chapter reports a study exploring what Victoria-based universities prepared for their business students' employability skills. The data collected from websites of four universities of different institutional contexts were analyzed using a content analysis approach. The findings revealed that communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, presentation, use of tools, and technology skills were the most common skills that all four universities stated important for the development of their student's human capital. It also indicated that they prepared for their students' social, cultural, and psychological capital via curricular and extra-curricular activities, including internships, overseas exchange programs, and other activities. It also revealed that these universities helped students shape their career identity by appropriate strategies, such as developing subjects in the curriculum or delivering skills workshops designed to train students in essential career planning and career management skills.

Introduction

Recent decade have witnessed various changes in national and international workplace contexts that demand employees to possess a greater set of skills on top of specialized knowledge and skills (Carnevale & Smith, 2013). Therefore, universities worldwide have invested significant efforts to develop employability for their students through curricular and extra-curricular activities and enterprise engagement (Altan & Altıntas, 2017; Blackmore et al., 2016; Bradford, 2013; Tran, 2017).

The Australian Higher Education sector, tapping into the increased government interest in the so-called employability agenda, has also put in much effort and investment to develop employability skills for their graduates. Following politically driven activities, Australian universities have engaged with employability agenda at diverse levels. For instance, Kinash et al.'s (2016) study identifies around twelve strategies,

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mostly happening outside of the mainstream curriculum that the Australian universities are using to train students for employability. Barrie et al. (2009) also document the approaches toward career development skills or the specific curriculum initiatives for personal development planning and work-integrated learning in both the UK and Australia. Such approaches conflate employability with a diverse yet limited understanding of this concept, place it outside of the mainstream curriculum, and consider its development as the responsibility of the career services or professional development personnel.

Despite the Australian Higher Education Sector's significant investment in employability development initiatives (Kinash et al., 2014), graduates' employment rates have increased slowly from 68.1% in 2014 to 71.8% in 2017 (Graduate Careers Australia, 2018). According to the Graduate Outcomes Survey (2021), under the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, the full-time employment rate also increased slightly, from 68.7% in 2020 to 68.9% in 2021 (GOS National Report, 2021). It means there are approximately 30% of Australian graduates who could not secure employment after their graduation. This raises questions about the relevance and effectiveness of developing employability for students in Australia, which needs to be further explored.

To partially address this issue, the current chapter presents a qualitative study exploring what employability skills Victoria-based universities are developing for their business students, based on the learning outcomes published on their websites. The study is significant because it provides insights into the focus and strategies that Victoria-based universities are executing to enhance their students' employability. Without understanding what and how the university is delivering employability to their students, it is difficult to improve the effectiveness of the employability agenda.

Literature Review

Employability and Employability Capital

There have been different perspectives about graduate employability. Generally, it is defined as the skills, understanding, and personal attributes that support a person to find employment (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). Some scholars, for instance, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005, p. 215), proposed to consider employability with reference to personal circumstances and external factors. They view that employability is not simply about securing an employment opportunity upon graduation, but it is also about thriving in their career and remaining competitive and employable throughout their life (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Lately, graduate employability was expanded to include the ability to secure and create jobs that benefit graduates themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy (Oliver, 2015).

Several studies have attempted to identify a list of skills that employers look for in job applicants (e.g., Brunner et al., 2018; McMurray et al., 2016; Stevens & Norman, 2016). However, such a list of skills needed by employers are often short-lived because their needs and the labor markets constantly change. Therefore, employability should move beyond the concept of a skill list to include concepts that better capture the nature of employability. The extant literature suggests that graduate employability comprises human capital, social capital, cultural capital, personal adaptability, and career identity (Clarke, 2017; Fugate et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2017).

Generally, *human capital* is regarded as "abilities, expertise, and how-how which employers perceive as the candidates' ability to "do the job" (Hogan et al., 2013, p. 12). Human capital also helps understand the motivations for skills development in individuals and organizations to identify a person who has higher productivity, higher wages, and better employment opportunities (Felstead et al., 2002). According to McArdle et al. (2007), the term refers to personal variables that may affect one's career advancement, including education, work experience, training, skills, and knowledge. Human capital development is considered the primary foundation for graduate success (Clarke, 2017). According to Bourdieu (1986), the definition of *human capital*, from the very beginning, does not move beyond "economism" and it also ignores the fact that scholastic achievements from education action depend on the cultural capital previously invested.

Social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 248–249). Related to graduate employability, social capital refers to "the sum of social relationships and networks" that helps mobilize graduates' existing human capital and bring them closer to the labor market and its opportunity structures (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 342). Fugate et al. (2004) argue that social capital enhances individuals' employability as they get pertinent advice and practical assistance from their social network (McArdle et al., 2007). Arum and Roksa (2014) study assigns more importance to contacts and networking than skills or credentials. However, the contribution of social networks to graduates' employment outcomes needs further research to confirm our understanding in this regard (McArdle et al., 2007).

Cultural capital is used to refer to an individual's competence in high status culture (Bourdieu, 1986) or is reported as an individual's education status (McArdle et al., 2007). More specifically, this term refers to cultural signals such as attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behavior, and credentials (Lamont & Lareau, 1988) aligned to the workplaces that graduates seek to enter (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 343). The term also signifies the transference of cultural knowledge between an individual's socio-cultural environment and the educational context. After Bourdieu, literature extensively discusses the implications of cultural capital. Scholars generally agree that cultural capital may play a crucial role in shaping graduate employability (Donald et al., 2017; Heather & Roy, 2018; Killick & Dean, 2013; Tomlinson, 2017).

In addition, *psychological capital*, *career identity,* and *personal adaptability* also contribute to employability capital. According to Williams et al. (2015), psychological capital refers to attributes such as confidence, hope, resilience, positive self-evaluation that offer strengths within the job market. Career identity, also called "self-concept and personal narratives" (Tomlinson, 2017), regards the way individuals define themselves in the career context. Career identity involves personal interests, capabilities, goals, and cultural values (Kielhofner, 2002), as well as career motivation, personal meaning, and individual values (McArdle et al., 2007). These psychological attributes sustain students'/graduates' efforts in building their employability, whereas career identity helps direct what they need to develop to realize the identity.

The Employability Agenda in Australian Universities

In the Australian higher education context, the increased emphasis on making young people work-ready indicates a deep "interpenetration of economic capital and university education" (Marginson & Considine, 2000). The first movement toward developing graduate employability centered around equipping them with "the knowledge, skills, and motivations embodied in people," which is termed human capital, to contribute to the new knowledge-based economy (Curtis & McKenzie, 2001, p. 2).

In executing employability policy, Australian universities have selected different skillsets to develop for their students and have launched diverse curricular initiatives and curriculum reforms (Bowden, 2004; Trevelyan et al., 2010; Barrie et al., 2009). The universities have also employed different pedagogic models and approaches, including collaboration with enterprises to promote employability (Billett, 2010; Jackson, 2015). They also use diverse out-of-curriculum activities to execute the employability agenda (Barrie et al., 2009; Kinash et al., 2016).

However, several studies have pointed out gaps in executing the employability agenda. Stakeholders are found to hold different beliefs and attitudes toward the relevance of the employability agenda (de la Harpe & David, 2012; Jones, 2009). Teachers appear to disengage from teaching employability skills, noting that it is not relevant to their role as an academic, or that they do not feel confident teaching such skills (de la Harpe & David, 2012; Jones, 2009). Pedagogical practices conducive to the development of employability skills, such as work-integrated learning, face a lack of internship opportunities, supervision practice, and difficulties in assessing employability skills (Jackson, 2015; Tran & Huynh, 2019). Resultantly, the efforts to develop workplace skills among university graduates fail to yield the desired results.

Most remarkably, scholars critique that the failure in executing the employability agenda starts with the conceptualization of employability as skills (Cumming, 2010). Several employability scholars propose to expand the construct of employability (Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017, p. 89). This broad conceptualization of employability should include career management skills in addition to a narrow generic skillset (Bridgstock, 2009). It should aim to produce critically-reflective and empowered learners instead of equipping graduates with some additional skills (Harvey, 1999). It should promote "contextualized performance" rather than skill-based performativity (Cumming, 2010, p. 406). It should extend beyond human capital to include social capital, individual attributes and behaviors, perceived employability, and labor market variables (Clarke, 2017). However, this conceptualization of employability may face resistance due to its complexity, differences in institutional missions and visions, and even political endorsement in which quality assurance is part (Hughes & Barrie, 2010).

Nevertheless, recent research also reports a shift in how Australian universities approach the employability agenda: from developing generic skills that incorporate economic agenda driven by the government and industry to graduate attributes that include social lifelong learning agenda (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009). Pitman and Broomhall's (2009) study suggests a considerable variance among universities in their emphasis on developing the key competencies and lifelong learning agenda. This variance corresponds to diverging institutional core missions and values (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009), signaling that universities are not driven only by money but also by the desire to sustain its institutional values and academic cultures (Marginson & Considine, 2000). Bosanquet (2011) also views the institutional expression of graduate capabilities as a powerful means to communicate institutional values, skills, and knowledge that universities aim to transfer to students.

Unfortunately, despite much effort invested into the employability agenda, employers still complain about Australian graduates' lack of skills (Graduate Careers Australia, 2018; Lindorff, 2011). For example, in 2021, only 67.8% of new undergraduates could secure a job in managerial or professional occupations four months upon graduation, which was lower than the 69.5% reported in 2020, 69.9% reported in 2019, and 72.1% reported in 2018 (GOS National Report, 2021), suggesting that many of them fell short of employers' expectations. Therefore, while it is essential to maintain the values that each institution attaches to, it is important to identify relevant skills/attributes/competencies to develop for students so that they can function well in their personal and work lives. Without doing so, debates on what hinders the effectiveness of executing the employability agenda are meaningless.

The Present Study

In this chapter, we report a qualitative case study exploring the employability skills that Business programs of four Victoria-based Australian universities are developing for their students. The chapter seeks answers to the following questions:

- What employability skills are Victoria-based universities developing for their Business students?
- How do they deliver these skills to students?

We considered employability skill development as a phenomenon, so the case study approach was adopted for this study because it enabled us to discover or investigate a phenomenon in context from different sources of evidence (Baxter & Jack, 2008). For data collection, we used the document analysis technique. In qualitative research, documents, including public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain about a site or participants, can be a useful tool to verify evidence (Creswell, 2014). The purpose of this inquiry is to examine the learning outcomes of business students in Victorian higher education institutions (HEIs); therefore, we identified and analyzed several existing documents as data sources. These included statements of learning outcomes, the curriculum, employability-related policies, guidelines, and brochures that reported employability and employment outcomes.

The four Victorian universities were purposefully chosen, representing two groups: research-intensive and vocational-oriented universities. All these universities are offering Business programs, and they publish statements of learning outcomes on their websites. Besides, their main campuses are located in the state of Victoria. The context of each university is presented in the Finding section to ease the comprehension of the findings.

A content analysis approach was used to analyze the data. It involves the coding, categorization, and abstraction of data (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Throughout the steps, information relevant to skill sets and universities' activities to promote students' employability skills were repeatedly reviewed for content. They were highlighted and coded case by case and then were compared across the cases for the similarities and differences. After having the initial list of codes, they were organized into categories to draw the major topics. Finally, a table was created to group the most common knowledge, and core skills, and the delivery approaches in these universities.

Findings

The analysis showed that the four universities developed specialized knowledge, core skills, and other graduate attributes for their business students. The following sections will report the type of skills and activities they used to prepare work-readiness skills for their students.

University A

As a public research university, university A is one of Australia's two oldest universities, established in the 1850s. The Business programs offered by university A commenced in the 1990s and is currently becoming one of the most highly sought degrees of its types in Australia.

The University A's Business School reported that the university's target was to provide students with knowledge and skills necessary for students' understanding and participation in the modern business world. Students could choose a number of subjects from disciplines outside of commerce, allowing them access to multidisciplinary knowledge and skills. At the subject level, core knowledge in business education was developed. In terms of generic skills development, they chose to develop communication skills, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork skills, cultural competence, presentation skills, analytical skills, leadership skills, use of tools and technology skills, independent working skills, time management skills, negotiation skills, and research skills. Furthermore, students were supposed to have other graduate attributes, such as confidence, academic excellence, self-motivation, mindfulness, resilience, wellbeing, career identification, and active global citizens. The school organized internships to provide business students with opportunities to practice at local or international workplaces. This university held internships as providing the best opportunities and environment for business students' career development. The university also emphasized developing student skills in building networks, enhancing their leadership, communication, negotiation, teamwork capabilities, and acquiring business skills.

Regarding extra-curricular activities, it was reported that students could access a variety of activities, including clubs, complementary studies (i.e., skills workshops for job hunting strategies, CV development, job interviewing tips, etc.), as well as overseas student exchange opportunities. The school proudly informed that their clubs and societies made remarkable efforts for their students and community, like providing industry connections, consulting for local and international charities, and supporting women's financial empowerment. The university also encouraged all business students to undertake exchange programs in different countries, such as the USA, Italy, Sweden, Germany, China, Korea, Singapore, etc., that could contribute to their cultural capital development by attaining an international perspective on their studies. Lastly, their students could develop their confidence, resilience, and adaptability to solve difficult problems they may face in the future by attending professional development and training workshops held by the university.

University B

Established in the 1850s, University B is the second oldest university in Victoria and is also a research-intensive university. Its Business School is well-known for its top world ranking.

The Business school website of University B details a variety of options available to students for acquiring skills necessary for securing and sustaining employment in their future careers. At the subject level, the university offers ten different majors to provide diversity across all business areas. Business-specified subjects equip students with broad business knowledge, technical skills, and a well-understanding of multidisciplinary decision-making in organizations. In terms of core skills, they chose to develop communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, cultural competence, presentation, planning and organization, leadership, tools and technology, decision-making, negotiation, research, and creativity skills for students. Students were also equipped with graduate attributes such as personal identity, resilience, confidence, professionalism and career skills, and initiative and enterprise skills. Students were required to complete Business-specified subjects, which provided a knowledge foundation for students. Students were also free to choose elective subjects for further specialized knowledge of their chosen major. Work-integrated learning was offered to help students gain valuable practical experience in the host organizations. The university also offered corporate and community projects, which allowed students to develop both business and research skills. Students were required to demonstrate their ability to apply a broad range of business theories to solve business issues, reflect upon the experience, and report on their learning throughout the projects.

Regarding extra-curricular activities, the university invited external stakeholders from various private, public sectors, and not-for-profit organizations in mentoring programs for twelve weeks per academic year. The school reported that it was essential to be outstanding in a very competitive job market to get a promising job. For this, the school provided students with a platform called "Student Futures" to develop, track, and identify the employability skills they were building during their time at university.

University C

Located in Melbourne, University C has campuses across Melbourne's central and western suburbs. Known as a newly established public university, which achieved university status in the 1990s, the university represents the dual-sector universities in Australia, offering vocational education and higher education. The College of Business is one of Australia's largest business schools, providing various business-related areas, including business, management, accounting, finance, supply chain and logistics, marketing, and human resources.

At the subject level, the school aspires to develop students' solid foundation in core business studies from an array of eleven specialty business areas. The university had a WIL Centre for assisting students in preparing for employment. This institution also had an extensive connection with government and multinational enterprises, which provided workplace learning opportunities and placements. The university data showed that there were approximately 300 work-integrated learning partners for Business students annually. This university emphasized the development of a wide range of generic skills: communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, cultural competence, and presentation skills along with analytical, organizational, interpersonal, and decision-making skills. The learning outcomes statement also revealed that they promoted self-motivation, resilience, hard work, and adaptability for students to accomplish their studies. Last, students are expected to develop lifelong learning attributes, such as autonomous and self-directed learning skills and habits.

The university organized a wide range of clubs regarding extra-curricular activities, including academic, political, cultural, social, art, religious, sports, and recreation areas. The academic club was expected to expand students' academic and social networks, while other clubs were believed to help students develop various skills needed for their success. The university also organized career mentor programs and workshops to teach skills in resume and cover letter writing, job interviews, and career planning strategies.

University D

Known as a public university, established in the 1900s, University D offers a range of vocational, undergraduate, and postgraduate programs. The business program is designed to enhance knowledge and core skills in business, management, and operations necessary to prepare students for modern organizations' roles.

At the subject level, students were required to complete eight core units in business areas and up to 16 units of each major. Students were expected to define and integrate theoretical principles applicable to a business discipline and apply those principles in a range of practices. The university also integrated career planning skills into their disciplinary curriculum to equip students with skills, experiences, and attributes that would maximize their potential to secure employment and progress their future careers. Regarding core skills, the university chose to develop communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, cultural competence, and presentation skills. Other skills involved analytical skills, use of tools and technology skills, decision-making, and creativity. Furthermore, other expected attributes included confidence, personal identity, self-reflection of personal strengths, professional brand, wellbeing, resilience, and career management skills for students' smooth transition into the workplace.

The WIL program included 6–12-month placement, internship, industry-linked projects, and study tours to provide Business school students with opportunities to gain invaluable skills necessary for their future jobs. It was expected that the internship would support students to master their professional and practical skills in the business workplace. Industry-linked projects would develop students' problem-solving, teamwork, communication skills, and confidence in the workplace. Furthermore, study tours were organized to nurture a broad range of work-related skills, attributes, and cultural awareness.

Table 4.1 summarizes the most common knowledge and core skills and the approaches that the universities adopt to deliver the knowledge and skills to their Business students.

Table 4.1 Knowledge and skills that Victorian-based universities are developing for their business students

	Research-intensive universities		**Vocationally oriented universities**	
	University A	**University B**	**University C**	**University D**
Knowledge	• Broad knowledge in organizational behavior, macro and microeconomics theory and policy; • Mathematical and statistical skills in economics, accounting, marketing, management, and finance; • Understanding of theories of faculty specializations • Broad knowledge in economic and organizational environments in domestic and international contexts	• Broad knowledge and technical skills in business areas; • Well-developed understanding of multi-disciplinary decision-making in organizations via application of knowledge from core business discipline areas	• Solid foundation in core business studies • Integrate conceptual understanding of advanced specialist knowledge within the business discipline • Well-developed knowledge of business theory in a variety of domestic and international contexts	• Core knowledge in business, management, and operations • Integrated theoretical principles applicable to a business discipline and apply those principles in a range of practices

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

	Research-intensive universities		Vocationally oriented universities	
	University A	**University B**	**University C**	**University D**
Generic skills	• Communication skills • Critical thinking skills • Problem-solving skills • Teamwork skills • Cultural competence • Presentation skills • Analytical skills • Leadership skills • Use of tools and technology skills • Work independently • Time management skills • Negotiation skills • Research skills	• Communication skills • Critical thinking skills • Problem-solving skills • Teamwork skills • Cultural competence • Presentation skills • Planning and organization skills • Leadership skills • Use of tools and technology skills • Decision-making skills • Negotiation skills • Research skills • Creativity skills	• Communication skills • Critical thinking skills • Problem-solving skills • Teamwork skills • Cultural competence • Presentation skills • Analytical skills • Organizational skills • Interpersonal skills • Decision-making skills	• Communication skills • Critical thinking skills • Problem-solving skills • Teamwork skills • Cultural competence • Presentation skills • Analytical skills • Use of tools and technology skills • Decision-making skills • Creativity skills
Other attributes	• Confidence • Self-motivation • Mindfulness • Resilience and wellbeing • Career identification • Being global citizen • Academically excellent	• Confidence • Personal identity • Professionalism and careers skills • Resilience • Initiative and enterprise skills • Career identification	• Personal identity • Self-motivation • Adaptability • Lifelong learning attributes • Change readiness and resilience	• Personal identity • Confidence • Self-reflection of personal strengths • Professional brand • Wellbeing and resilience • Career management skills

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

	Research-intensive universities		**Vocationally oriented universities**	
	University A	**University B**	**University C**	**University D**
Delivery approaches	• Capstone studies • Internship • Overseas exchange programs • Extra-curricular activities • Leadership programs • Complementary studies • Career mentoring program • Local and international case competitions • Professional development programs, workshops, seminars, and events	• Capstone studies • Internship • Overseas exchange programs • Extra-curricular activities • Leadership programs • Networking opportunities with business leaders • Corporate project • “Student Futures” tool • Professional development workshops	• Core business units • Internship • Overseas exchange programs • Extra-curricular activities • Student societies and associations • Networking opportunities with industry, government, and community	• Core business units • Internship • Professional placements • Accreditation placements • Study tours • Industry-linked projects

Discussion

Dimensions of Employability That the Universities Develop for Business Students

This chapter identifies the varying employability skills that four Victoria-based universities develop for their business students through the information shown on each university's website. By tapping into the employability capital framework discussed in the previous studies (Clarke, 2017; Fugate et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2017), this study suggests that the four universities aspired to prepare their business students' employability skills in the following five dimensions.

Firstly, in terms of human capital, the four universities commonly developed similar knowledge and skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork skills. These findings are consistent with the previous studies in a global context that establish employers' expectation of their potential employees to have the above skills to satisfy the job requirements (Chhinzer & Russo, 2018). From employers' perspective, oral communication skills are crucial for recruitment, job success, and promotion of business graduates (Crosling & Ward, 2002). All four universities in this inquiry integrated communication skills in their learning outcomes. Problem-solving skills are also deemed essential for employees to make quick and logical decisions in their jobs (Rasul et al., 2012). This study supports Binkley et al. (2012) claim that critical thinking and problem-solving skills have become an increasingly important feature of the curriculum across the world. All four universities described critical thinking skills diversely, such as critically evaluating new research findings and applying critical and analytical skills to identify, evaluate, and solve complex problems. This diverse yet consistent representation of skills as integral to university curriculum suggests that these core skills can contribute to business students' human capital development and are relevant to the labor market requirements as shown in the literature on employability.

Secondly, in terms of social capital, all four universities successfully secured connections with industries to organize on-campus work-skills development activities for students. Consequently, students would have opportunities to work with clients in a range of industries and organizations, both locally and globally. The vocationally oriented universities considered enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, the engagement of industry, government, and the community as a part of their mission. Likewise, the collaboration between universities and enterprises could help universities satisfy the workplace requirements and create better images for students (Cooper et al., 2010). Previous studies (Martin, 2013) also confirmed that participating in extra-curricular activities helped with job-readiness and enhanced professional habits. However, in other research, students had negative attitudes toward these activities and felt demotivated to participate in them because of organizers' unprofessional attitude (Altan & Altıntas, 2017). This study has not examined the effectiveness of extra-curricular activities on students' skills development. Future studies should be carried out to investigate how business students develop employability skills via extra-curricular activities. Nevertheless, from an institutional perspective, vocational universities in this study consider social capital-networking with industry important in their mission statements, confirming Tomlinson's (2017) conclusions.

Thirdly, the university programs offered students many chances to build international experience, such as overseas study opportunities and exchange programs, which contributed to their cultural capital development. Business students here were expected to be a responsible and active global citizen who could operate cross cultural competence when engaging in an international world (University A). The term *global citizen* was used to refer to a person who is willing to "contribute to society in a full and meaningful way through their roles as members of local, national and global communities" (Barrie, 2012, p. 86). The findings suggest integrating global citizenship skills into the core of the curriculum for developing students' capacities to secure employment in global enterprises. Universities B, C, and D shared similar viewpoints on business students' awareness of cultural differences, their appreciation of the value of diversity and intercultural settings, and their ability to develop solutions to achieve effective business practices. This is aligned with previous studies viewing that "international experience also contributed to the development of cultural sensitivity and adaptability as well as enhancing graduate attractiveness in a globalized and internationalized labor market" (Crossman & Clarke, 2009, p. 609).

Fourthly, these four institutions used appropriate strategies to develop students' confidence, resilience, and adaptability required for success in the labor market. Within curriculum-based activities, students were encouraged to interact with others via teamwork activities. By doing so, they developed resilience and adaptability to changing circumstances by managing, negotiating, and expressing ideas in group tasks. WIL experiences such as internship and work-oriented projects in these universities were not only valuable sources for students to apply theory into real-life work, but they also developed students' flexibility and resilience at workplaces. All four universities highly appreciated internships for building students' employability skills. This is consistent with the literature that internships and placements make students feel more confident about their employability (Jackson & Wilton, 2017). In addition, students were encouraged to participate in overseas student exchange programs to develop their psychological capital. The challenges experienced in the exchange programs were likely to help the student adapt to new learning environments in different cultures, which increases their intercultural competence. This finding is consistent with the claim that resilience and personal adaptability are important for employability, especially when graduates face challenges at the workplace (Fugate et al., 2004).

Fifthly, the findings indicated that all four universities helped their students to shape their career identity. At the subject level, students had opportunities to explore creative interests or topics they had been curious about through breadth subjects. For example, University D developed subjects such as *Planning for Career Success* or *Future Work Skills* for providing students with essential career planning and career management skills. Many students could discover new passions through breadth, and some even changed their career plans. As mentioned earlier, career and skills workshops were delivered to help students identify and assist with career planning. For example, Universities A and C organized skills workshops to support students with job hunting strategies, CV development, and career planning. University B used the "Student Futures" platform to help students identify and track their career plans during university time, while University D had career consultants who were available to help students develop a career plan and work toward their employment goals. These findings supported the recommendation that Higher education (HE) curricula and learning play a significant role in assisting students in developing self-perceptions and targets that shape their career development (Jackson, 2016). The study findings suggest that the examined business programs can contribute to orienting students in their selection of future careers.

Differences in Employability Perspectives

Furthermore, the investigation also indicated a difference between research-intensive universities and vocational-oriented universities in knowledge selection and research skills promotion because of their varied missions and values (see Pitman & Broomhall, 2009). While Universities A and B integrated research skills to their learning outcomes, Universities C and D's learning outcomes did not evidence any such tendency. Universities A and B were more likely to focus on research skills than Universities C and D. Being research-intensive universities, A and B universities had a mission of becoming one of the leading global providers of business and economic education and research. For university A, the aim was to enable individuals and organizations to become global leaders by creating, applying, and disseminating business and economics knowledge. Likewise, University B aimed to provide graduates with high-level skills in a range of key business disciplines. Research skills in business were underscored in the statements of learning outcomes of universities A and B.

The mission of the vocational-oriented Universities C and D was (1) to drive business schools for innovation, entrepreneurship, and social impact in the region (university D); (2) to create exceptional value for any students from any background and the uplifting of the communities (university C). Thus, technical skills development was not their priority as non-technical skills were held to be more critical in their selection of skills for their students. In fact, universities C and D required students to have a strong foundation in core business studies and an ability to apply the theoretical principle to a business discipline for having secure jobs. As mentioned earlier, education is the most important component of human capital (Hogan et al., 2013; McArdle et al., 2007). However, some authors also argue that soft skills are more critical and are preferred by employers (Dunbar et al., 2016; Stewart et al., 2016). It can be argued that excellent academic achievement and high levels of business knowledge alone are insufficient for employability. Business schools should consider promoting business graduate employability by offering programs that purposefully develop core skills—especially communication and interpersonal skills—and encourage students to build their confidence for satisfying the recruiters' requirements in the workplace.

The differences above can be explained by the concepts of social field and habitus by Bourdieu (1998). A field is a structured system of social positions in which individuals or institutions occupy. The nature of this structured system of social positions defines the situations for their occupations. Bourdieu uses the concept of *habitus* to imply a set of schemes that are generated by particular conditions that influence on how individuals think and act (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Dumenden and English (2013) also differentiate between individual/personal and group/collective habitus, in which individual habitus is “a variant of the group or class habitus in that it expresses the difference between positions and trajectories of individuals within and outside the group,” collective habitus can be formed by “the homogeneity in the conditions of existence by a group of agents” (p. 1080). Field and habitus have a close connection that cannot be understood separately. They mutually influence each other and make each other change through time (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Within this study, institutions are placed within a social field defined by contextual factors such as the Business discipline and their institution types with specific visions and missions; therefore, when they act (in this case, develop employability for their students), their thinking and actions are directed by such factors that define the social fields. Because research-intensive universities prioritize research skills, they tend to be more academic in their perspectives about what should be developed for their students. Vocational-oriented universities, on the contrary, emphasize more on non-technical skills in their selection of skills to develop for their students.

Conclusion

This study identified the skills set that the four Victoria-based universities are developing for their business students through five dimensions of employability capital. In terms of human capital, business students were expected to demonstrate core skills, including communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork as the most common and important skills for their future employment. In terms of social capital, these universities helped them build networks with industries and organizations via internships. They organized work-based learning, student clubs, career mentoring, and overseas exchange programs to develop cultural and psychological capital for students. Lastly, students were likely to develop their career identity and personal adaptation through curricular and extra-curriculum activities.

The study also revealed differences in institutional perspectives about what should be prepared to enhance graduate employability. The two research-intensive universities involved in this study paid attention to developing students’ research skills in business. On the other hand, the two vocational-oriented universities prioritized non-technical skills, especially communication and interpersonal skills, and confidence to satisfy recruiters’ requirements. This study suggests that the skills set selected by the four universities may form a good foundation for business students to prepare for their career-readiness and meet employers’ requirements, as indicated in the existing literature (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009; Stewart et al., 2016). However, it also suggests that although the selection of skills was influenced by contextual factors (Andrews & Higson, 2008). While a consensus on learning outcomes for all Business programs in Victorian universities is not expected and unrealistic, the important thing is to ensure that it matches employers' needs and helps students' employability throughout their lives.

It should be noted that the findings of this case study are based on data collected from websites of four randomly-selected institutions. The findings provide a snapshot on their institutional perspectives on what to prepare for Business students' future employability. They should not be generalized to all Business schools in Australian universities. Future studies should include different data sources and perspectives from a larger number of institutions to examine the ways business schools are preparing for their students' employability.

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Chapter 5

International Research Students' Perceptions of Employability Skills in a Malaysian Research University

Jasvir Kaur Nachatar Singh

Abstract Employability skills are largely conceptualized by employers and scholars and less by students, especially international research students in non-Western institutions. This chapter contributes to the literature by examining perceptions of employability skills of international research students at a Malaysian research university. The analysis of 27 semi-structured interviews reveals that students perceive employability skills, such as research, teaching, technical and project management skills as vital for their career outcomes. Soft skills, such as communication skills (both written and oral), interpersonal skills, flexibility, problem-solving and career planning, and personal attributes such as self-confidence and flexibility are necessary ingredients for the development of the skills cited. The chapter concludes that employability skills should not be assumed as a generic list of skills but as contextual skills which are desired by international research students to cater for their various employment opportunities either in their home, host or third country.

Introduction

Employability has gained much attention in research in higher education in recent years. Most research has adopted Yorke's (2006) definition of employability as the skills and characteristics of students in securing employment opportunities. However, Yorke also stated that students need to "acquire the skills, understandings and personal attributes that make them more likely to secure employment and be successful in their chosen occupations to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" (p. 8) in competitive labor markets. Tomlinson (2008) argues that acquiring human capital alone in current times will not suffice, because just possessing hard knowledge and limited skills of know-how through a degree program at a higher learning institution will not position a graduate for employment in the current fierce labor market. Sharing the same perspective, Clarke (2018) proposes that students orientate their behaviors in terms of career building

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skills and attributes such as adaptability and flexibility that affect their perceived employability, because "individuals evaluate their chance of success in the labor market and how they approach job search" (p. 1932).

Higher education institutions, under pressure from employers and policy makers, are developing employability skills for students in order to improve their employment outcomes and for economic and productivity growth (Clarke, 2018; Pitan & Muller, 2020). Strategies to develop employability for students often take into account university leaders', academics', employers' and graduates' perspectives (Bridgstock et al., 2019; Divan et al., 2019; Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010), but less is reported from the perspective of students, and especially international students (Huang, 2013). According to Tomlinson (2017), students equate employability with obtaining a job upon graduation but without any deep understanding of the need to build their employability skills while studying. International students also rely on international education to elevate their career prospects, but recent studies reveal a disconnect between skills and expertise acquired at university and job requirements (Singh, 2020; Tran et al., 2020). While such a disconnect can be attributed to students' disengagement from employability development programs in their institutions as the employability development programs may be perceived as irrelevant to them. For this reason, it is important to investigate international students' perspectives on employability skills because this provides another layer of complexity to the employability discussion.

In the case of Malaysia, postgraduate international students have greatly contributed to the economy through revenue generation and building the country as an international higher education hub (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). In 2017, there were 32,042 international postgraduate students, of whom 21,170 were at public universities and 10,872 at private universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018). International students in Malaysia are mainly from China (13,448), Indonesia (9,340), Bangladesh (7,739), Yemen (6,001), Pakistan (5,146) and Nigeria (4,822) (Ministry of Education, 2018). According to Singh et al. (2014), international students choose Malaysia because it is a safe, peaceful learning environment, has relatively low tuition fees and low cost of living, close proximity to students' home countries such as neighboring Asian countries (i.e., Indonesia and China), and access to *halal* food and other dietary requirements which are culture-specific. Like their counterparts around the world, these international students may invest in international education to enhance their career prospects.

The study in this chapter aims to explore the perceptions of postgraduate (research) international students in Malaysia of employability skills that enhance their employment outcomes, not only in their home country but beyond. The study will add more nuances in the discussion about relevant employability skills for international students, which is still under-investigated. The study may provide important implication for the design and delivery of employability programs in higher education to cater the needs of different student groups, instead of a generic program for all. This chapter is structured as follows. First, it explores the graduate employability agenda in higher education, followed by a brief review on employability skills for international research students in Malaysia. Then details of the research design and methods used are explained. Next, key findings on employability skills as perceived by research international students in Malaysia are presented. The chapter also provides discussion on and recommendations for the employability skills agenda in the Malaysian higher education system.

Graduate Employability Agenda in Higher Education

Higher education institutions globally are given a mandate by policy makers (government) and industry players (employers) to equip students with relevant, important job skills, as well as personal qualities. Employers value the importance of transferable or employability skills, which include possessing effective communication skills, "being self-effective and committed to results, on their capacity to build relationships in multiple teams, and on their ability to adapt to the external context" (Succi & Canovi, 2019, p. 11) in a globalized and knowledge economy era. However, numerous studies have revealed that employers remain unsatisfied with graduate employability skills (Clarke, 2018), because graduates are not job-ready for workforce needs and have inadequate understanding about linking institutional and workplace learning demands (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010). Employers globally are unhappy with graduates' soft skills, such as presentation, problem-solving, teamwork, written and oral communication and development of interpersonal relationships (Pitan & Muller, 2020; Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010). Given this skill deficit issue, employers prefer to hire graduates who have prior work experiences because they are then able to understand the work culture and environment better (Cheung & Xu, 2015).

With such expectations, higher education institutions are under pressure to develop graduates who are job-ready (Pitan & Muller, 2020). It is important for these work-related experiences and skills to be developed through higher education institution initiatives. A wide range of work integrated learning (WIL) programs are offered by universities which include "practicum, professional practice, internship, workplace learning, industry-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative education, fieldwork education, service learning, real-world learning, university engaged learning, experiential learning, clinical placements, work experience, clinical practice, doctoral supervision with industry partners, and work-based learning" (Oliver, 2015, p. 60). Extra- and/or co-curricular activities are also extended to students, such as provision of career services that provide guidance in resume writing or mock interviews, participation in sports groups, clubs or societies (ranging from cultural to social organizations) (Singh, 2020; Tran, 2017). However, Tran (2017) reports that students infrequently join such extra- or co-curriculum programs offered by higher education institutions. This is because students view these activities as less vital to their employment outcomes and they are much more interested in class-based learning activities and part-time work to support their studies. Singh (2020) has found that, although Chinese employers previously valued international degree graduates, currently they are seeking to employ graduates who have prior work experience, either through part-time jobs, internships or volunteering opportunities in which graduates have been able to practice what they have learned in theory and have gained professional skills. Hence, in order to engage these students in extra-curricular activities, universities may want to disseminate them via social media channels such as WeChat or QQ, which are widely utilized by Chinese international students (Huang & Turner, 2018).

According to Bridgstock (2009), purposely embedding employability skills into courses and curricula is another way to develop students' employability skills. Students in Pitan and Muller's study (2020) state that they are enthusiastic about acquiring relevant skills through the curriculum and they urge "universities [to] incorporate more employability programmes into the curriculum" (p. 12). Some activities include invite guest lecturers from industry or delivery of full courses by industry experts, practical sessions that include training which mimics real-world scenarios and industry applications, as well as industry and firm visits. Such activities benefit students because they are exposed to potential employers and gain understanding of workplace requirements. Employers also gain by interacting and connecting with prospective graduate employees and "academics ensure that the curricula content remains appropriate and relevant to the workplace" (Pitan & Muller, 2020, p. 12). With technological disruption and the wide range of skills required in the modern workplace, it is vital for businesses and universities to be more closely aligned and to collaborate with one another in terms of developing strategic employability skills.

These employability initiatives are offered to students to develop their generic skills, such as communication, team work, problem-solving, critical and innovative thinking, resilience, responsibility, self-confidence and the like, to make students job-ready in the future (Clarke, 2018; Purcell et al., 2002; Succi, 2019). These are non-technical skills and sometimes called "transferable skills" or "soft skills" or "generic skills" (Kenayathulla et al., 2019) that can be learned in an educational setting in order to gain employment upon graduation. Clarke (2018) argues that these skills are assessed within assignment tasks but are not taught in terms of practice, such as how to be an effective communicator. Moreover, employability may not be generic, but context-specific. Clarke's recent study (2018) indicates that, when higher learning institutions "adopt a list of generic skills, they fail to recognize differences between different professions, different organizations and even different cultural contexts" (p. 1927).

Although Young et al. (2020) state that doctoral candidates' employability is challenged due to current volatile employment prospects, exploration of postgraduate (research) students' experiences is not a very common topic in the literature. PhD students in Hodzic's (2016) study articulated that generic skills, such as written and oral communications skills, understanding, analyzing and solving problems, and teamwork skills, were mostly developed through their PhD programs. However, Young et al. (2020) highlight that there is a misalignment between what is needed from these postgraduate students upon graduation and what is wanted by employers at the workplace. Young et al. further assert that this includes the specialized knowledge and set of soft skills that are sought among students by future employers. However, there is some skepticism about "the efficiency and employability discourse, and the associated push for doctoral training that includes transferable skills and professional skills" (Young et al., 2020, p. 8). Molla and Cuthbert (2019) argue that skills-based employability discussion is insufficient for postgraduate (research) students because a deeper and more complex "capabilities" approach is demanded that aligns with labor market requirements. One solution proposed by Young et al. (2020) is to include postgraduate (research) students in the employability discussion.

Students, as one of the key agents and beneficiaries of the employability agenda, unfortunately are not often involved in the consultation process about what skills need to be developed for future employment (Barrie et al., 2009). For international students, this irrelevance may be higher still because they are disconnected from the employability programs offered by universities. For instance, Huang and Turner (2018) argue that Chinese international students have relatively low awareness of the usefulness of extra-curricular activities provided by universities for employment purposes. Failing to engage students in the employability agenda will impact students' employability journey and therefore it is important to look at employability skills from students' viewpoints.

Employability Skills for International Research Students in Malaysia

In the Malaysian context, employability research is skewed toward understanding local graduates' employability skills due to the high unemployment rate among Malaysian graduates. Although domestic undergraduate students in Shafie and Nayan's (2010) study understood employability skills such as problem-solving, teamwork and communication were needed to secure employment opportunities, a recent study by Kenayathulla et al. (2019) argues that Malaysian students themselves admit to not possessing such skills due to inadequate educational exposure through extra- and co-curriculum activities. Shafie and Nayan (2010) further assert that employers nowadays are not only employing graduates who know how to read and write but who also exhibit higher-order thinking skills, such as creative thinking, decision making and problem-solving. Seetha (2014) observes that many Malaysian employers are unhappy with graduates' acquisition of employability skills because they lack leadership skills, teamwork skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, communication skills and maintaining a positive attitude. However, according to Singh and Singh (2008), many Malaysian employers prefer to hire local graduates from public universities because they perceive these graduates have excellent academic qualifications and employability skills, as opposed to international graduates and private university graduates. This is further confirmed by Azmi et al. (2018): "public university students are more equipped with soft skills while private university students are more equipped with hard skills" (p. 12).

Although Knight (2014) has identified Malaysia as an international student hub due to the exponential increase in numbers of international students, especially in postgraduate studies, there are limited studies on international students, let alone those exploring employability perceptions and experiences (Yusoff, 2012). To the author's knowledge, there is one study led by Singh and Jack (2018) that investigates the benefits of studying in Malaysia based on postgraduate international students' experiences there. One benefit is acquisition of professional skills, such as research knowledge, publication skills and presentation skills, which are important for graduates to be able to contribute to their home countries and societies through specialized research projects. International postgraduate students in Malaysia develop their research knowledge and skills through attending research-related workshops, colloquiums and conferences, as well as a quality supervision process (Singh, 2018). In this context, Singh and Jack (2018) argue that "the goal of international higher education is to create employability in terms of the individual student getting a well-paid job that provides him/her with economic benefit, and social status" (p. 620).

Huang (2013) and Succi and Canovi (2019) suggest including the perceptions of international students, especially research students, of employability skills because in the existing literature this group receives much less attention for their views. Therefore, inclusion of postgraduate (research) international students in employability discussion is vital because they are from a different culture/market/country, so their perspectives about employability may differ from those specified by Malaysian government and universities. Therefore, equipping them with skills relevant to their beliefs will improve their engagement behaviors with their studies (Knight, & Yorke, 2006). Likewise, PhD students, i.e., one big group of postgraduate research students, are a special group of students whose needs for employability skills are much different from undergraduate students. This group of students have diverse prior work experiences and are proactive in developing their career; therefore, they may have their own needs of certain types of employability skills that are needed for their career development purposes. Hence, the research reported in this chapter was conducted to expand insights into perception of employability skills, from international students' points of view and at a postgraduate level, within a Malaysian research-focused university context. The research question of this study is: *"In international research students' perspectives, what employability skills are important for their career?"*.

Research Design and Methodology

A qualitative research approach was adopted to explore how international students perceive employability skills. In-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were adopted for data collection. This approach allows for exploration of lived experiences, reflections, perceptions and feelings of students in regard to understanding employability skills (Creswell, 2013). Silverman (2006) also suggests that one strength of qualitative research is "the ability to access directly what people actually do and perceived in real life" (p. 113). This is an essential strength since the main objective of this research is to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants.

Participants

Qualitative research usually adopts purposeful sampling, as deeper understanding of the experience can be accomplished to address the research questions (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, in this study, postgraduate international students were purposively selected, using these recruitment criteria: enrolled postgraduate international student studying in a leading Malaysian research-intensive university, and willing to share perceptions and experiences on employability. Initial contact was made with prospective participants with assistance from the Institute of Postgraduate Student Office at this Malaysian university. Once participants responded to an email, the author sent formal invitations for interviews and provided Participant Information Statements, Consent Forms and Withdrawal of Consent Forms. The researcher also used snowball sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) to recruit more participants from a participant's circle of acquaintances who met the recruitment criteria (Creswell, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). These chains of recommendations created, over time, a growing pool of participants, or "snowball" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Patton, 2002).

Of the 27 international students (20 males, seven females), 12 came from Nigeria, six from Pakistan, three from China, two from Indonesia, and one each from Bangladesh, Iran, Jordan and Yemen, all enrolled as PhD students. Table 5.1 shows their demographic details.

Table 5.1 Demographic details of postgraduate international students

Categories		Number
Gender	Male	20
	Female	7
Nationality	Nigeria	12
	Pakistan	6
	China	3
	Indonesia	2
	Bangladesh	1
	Iran	1
	Jordan	1
	Yemen	1
Degree	PhD	27
Prior employment status	Employed	22
	Unemployed	5

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were conducted in early January 2019. Interviews ranged between 18 and 40 min. They were digitally recorded, and transcribed verbatim using a professional transcription service. They were conducted in English and held at the university campus. Prior to data analysis, transcribed responses were sent to participants for verification of content and deletion of any information they did not wish included. All participants reviewed the interview transcripts and none provided any major deletion of information, thereby preserving data validity and some level of trustworthiness (McClure, 2003).

An inductive approach to thematic analysis was adopted because the purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of participants regarding employability skills that are important for their careers. The data are analyzed by coding, collating codes into possible themes and generating a thematic map, and defining themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The author randomly selects a transcript to read holistically for understanding experiences of participants and then writes keywords or phrases describing what participants mean (Tesch, 1990) on the right-hand side of the page. A selective reading approach is adopted by the author by highlighting significant statements to formulate meanings (van Manen, 1990). While reading and doing the coding, the question “What statement(s) or phrases(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93) is asked to formulate further meanings.

The next step is to group similar codes and redundant codes and reduce the list to a smaller, more manageable number (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The author highlights the quotes which support the codes using different colored highlighters. Although this process is complex, time-consuming and energy-demanding because the author analyzes the data manually, as coding progresses and themes emerge the analysis becomes more structured and organized (Ezzy, 2002). The list of codes is then reduced to establish themes (Creswell, 2008) that answer the research question. In reporting qualitative comments, the following convention is used: IS for international student, interview number (i.e., IS 1, IS 2, etc.).

Findings and Discussions

International research students at this university understood employability skills as research, teaching, technical and management skills that were important for their future career outcomes. International research students at Malaysian universities are proactive in developing such skills, not only through knowledge gained from international degrees but also from research work and attendance at academic workshops, conferences and seminars (Singh, 2018; Singh & Jack, 2018). The rationale for developing these skills is to increase international research students’ employability, not only for home country utilization but also for host and/or third countries.

Research Skills

Many postgraduate international students strongly suggested that building their research skills is an important skill for employment in the higher education sector, especially in their home country:

> The skills depend upon the job conditions. If the job is relevant to research, then you must be good at research skills. You must have a good research background and have very good research ideas. For me working in a university in Pakistan, I will have to build my strong research background, I have to publish some good impact factor papers. (IS 19, Pakistan, Communication Studies)
>
> I want to be a lecturer in the university; therefore, I need the skills to do research and to have some publications. These are very important measurement tools to work in a university. (IS 24, China, Mathematics)

Postgraduate international students acknowledged that developing and strengthening their research skills in terms of publications, conducting field work and research practices is important to enhance their employment as lecturers, especially in the higher education sector in their home countries. As lecturers themselves, they are aware that a good knowledge of research practices is an important asset to be future prolific lecturers and researchers in a university. In order to do research well, skills should be supported by an array of soft skills, such as communication, interpersonal skills, flexibility and improvisation in collecting data from participants, analyzing the data and disseminating their research work.

The motivations behind their aspiration to master research skills are that they want to advance their academic careers, as is the case with IS 24 and IS 19, who have significant work experience in the higher education sector. Some with limited academic work experience also want to secure their employment in this industry, so they believe that research skills are the prerequisite, but publications associated with research skills are currency for them to enter and thrive in an academic career. For example, A PhD international student from China, who has limited work experience as a lecturer, specifically cited publication skills:

> Publication is very important for a researcher. If I can have more publications, this will increase my employment chance in the future in Malaysia. Only publications can give you a higher salary in a university. The degree is just a small issue. […]. I'm very confident that if I can have more experience in writing for publications, I can get a very good job. But these publications must be in very good journals. (IS 18, China, Applied Linguistics)

Higher education is an extremely competitive employment sector globally. This postgraduate international student who aspires to work in a Malaysian (host country) university is well aware of the importance placed on research productively, especially publication in good journals, to gain employment, despite limited work experience in the higher education sector at present. Therefore, writing skills, which are often classified as part of verbal communication, are developed for publication purposes. McGrail et al. (2006) argue that publication is a vital activity for all academics to disseminate knowledge. Publications are also a measurement "of individual and institutional performance and are important criteria in achieving external funding from government and other professional bodies" (McGrail et al., 2006, p. 19). Not only are strong track records in publications used for promotion (McGrail et al., 2006), nowadays they are used as an indicator for recruitment purposes all over the world (Szromek & Wolniak, 2020; Wahlén, 2002).

Another motivation for mastering research skills is that some have aspirations to establish research centers in their home countries and also to benefit their future research students (Masters and PhD) and train them well in research. This understanding adds to Singh and Jack's (2018) research: they propose that research skills are acquired by postgraduate international students so that they benefit students' "research outputs [and] may enhance the university's global reputation" (p. 618) and rankings. Some are also motivated to work for private companies that recruit highly skilled workers, such as in the case of IS2 below. This finding reflects the fact that not all PhD students want to develop their career in academia but may venture into building their own business using research skills they have acquired or may work in an industry outside the traditional but shrinking labor market of the higher education sector (McCarthy & Wienk, 2019; Roach & Sauermann, 2017).

Teaching Skills

Most postgraduate international students who aspired to be academics pointed out that teaching skills are regarded as important in order to gain academic employment:

> If the job is relevant to some teaching, then you will have some very good communication skills, as you need to know how to communicate the concepts with students and how to deal with the question and answer sessions. So, the skills required, according to the conditions of job, the skill will be varied. (IS 19, Pakistan, Communication Studies)
>
> I have been lecturing in my own country, so when I got in Malaysia and started my teaching experience through graduate assistantship, I did not find it very difficult in communicating with the students. I do joke in my teaching, because mathematics is somewhat demanding. And students, they don't really, generally, like mathematics. So, I have to explain using some kind of animation in order for them to understand the course. (IS 20, Nigeria, Mathematics)

In their statements, the two students highlighted the role of communication skills, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, flexibility and some personality aspects which appear to significantly enhance their teaching effectiveness. These skills are often classified as generic or soft skills and are often overlooked by students and academics. In these students' discussion of the importance of teaching skills for their future career, these soft skills are brought to the fore supporting the underpinning teaching methodology knowledge and skills that students have acquired.

Braxton et al. (2000) confirm that good teaching skills and communication skills have a positive influence on students' social integration, success, learning and engagement. Therefore, at this Malaysian university, the Graduate Assistantship scheme was introduced to develop teaching skills for postgraduate international students. Through this scheme, international research students are able to harness their communication and teaching skills. This scheme has benefited students who were lecturers in their home countries and also future lecturers who want to work in the Malaysian higher education sector. It has harnessed their teaching competence in terms of confidence, reflective teaching, student-centered teaching styles and creative teaching methodologies, such as animation.

This finding is consistent with Pham and Nguyen (2020) who found that teaching skill is regarded as an important recruitment criterion for new academic staff members in higher education institutions. It also aligns with recent studies calling for a more attention to developing teaching skills for academic staff members (Pham & Nguyen, 2020; Wahlén, 2002). Indeed, lack of teaching skills is problematic in maintaining qualified staff members to teach specialized university programs and it negatively impacts the quality of teaching and learning agenda at higher education institutions (Pham & Nguyen, 2020). If higher education institutions "do not pay enough attention to aspects of learning and teaching when hiring, promoting and rewarding staff run the risk of losing or not attracting sufficiently qualified staff" (Wahlén, 2002, p. 86).

Technical Skills

International research students also perceive technical skills as important for their future careers in their home country, with "technical skills" denoting skills related to using, handling or manipulating technological devices or applications. For example:

> Coding skills and machine-learning skills. I want to go back to Indonesia and give more knowledge to other students about machine learning and big data. For example, my research is on dengue fever and so I learn about how to predict with accuracy through machine learning. Indonesia has got a lot of dengue cases, so I think I can have an impact for my country. Data scientists like me have a good job in Indonesia, because some companies need the skill and very few people have it. So, if I go back, I will have a side job doing analysis in a company. But I also still want to be a lecturer, but I want to have a side job in some company as a data scientist. (IS 2, Indonesia, Computer Science)
>
> The employability skill for me is technical, which is operational research, as I can apply the skill to any industry. As my area of specialization is operational research, so I intend to open a consultancy company in Nigeria where we can maybe help the decision makers in some industries or analyze some data. (IS 27, Nigeria, Mathematics)

Student IS 2 is currently employed in an Indonesian private university and wants to go home to serve the university. However, she also asserted that she not only wants to work in the university but also wants to have a second job working in a company leveraging on her technical skills such as coding and machine learning that she will develop through studying for her PhD in Malaysia. PhD student, IS 27, wants to establish a consultancy company in Nigeria with the operational research skill achieved upon study completion. Such a vision of career development opportunities, or career planning skills, is also among personal qualities that contribute to the development of career identity, which in turns affect the development of other employability skills (Tomlinson, 2017). In Bourdieu's (1977) terms, this is when the students develop their *habitus*, i.e., their way of thinking and acting, by linking the current experience with the past experiences.

It appears that postgraduate international students are thinking broadly in terms of developing their employability skills. They are not only wanting to have a job but also other employment opportunities with their specialized or technical skills in their area of expertise, which is understandable as they are among brightest minds. They also want to make a difference or impact by utilizing their skills in areas that will benefit their home countries. Such good intentions are in line with the Malaysian policy in the Strategic Plan where international students from developing and under-developing countries are encouraged to return home as graduates "who are knowledgeable and competent in their fields, [are] able to put into practice knowledge gained" (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007, p. 12). This finding also confirms Campbell, Kelly-Weber and Lavallee's (2020) argument that international higher education provides opportunities for students from low- and middle-income countries to transfer and apply newly obtained skills, knowledge, technology and attitudes in their home countries.

Project Management Skills

Two PhD students from Pakistan and Nigeria perceived project management skills acquired through leading university projects and events vital for their future careers:

> Improved management skills, to lead a project. I noticed in myself that my managerial and communication skills have improved by being a co-director to arrange different events as well as to network with students, staff members as well people outside the university. It is a very new experience for me and I am very happy to have successfully done this for the last two years. (IS 4, Pakistan, Archaeology)
>
> I was chairing some events at this university and in that process, I came to know how to write effectively but also officially, how to communicate with international people coming to attend the events and how to manage students. I have really learnt a lot. (IS 29, Nigeria, Social Sciences)

Both of these students are confident in gaining managerial skills by leading university projects as a project and events director and co-director. Resembling postgraduate international students in Singh (2019), students in this study also state that they have acquired project management skills for future career development purposes by organizing conferences and meetings while studying in Malaysia. This finding reflects on Bourdieu's (1977) time dimension where these postgraduate international students are being strategic in grasping opportunities offered by the university to gain project management skills for their future employment purposes. Participants also reported that they have effectively developed other soft skills alongside project management skills by organizing university events over their years as postgraduate international students. They have improved in their communication and networking skills via management of international delegates, students and staff members, as well as writing skills via professional invitations. According to Singh (2019), with project management skills other skills are also acquired, such as communication, networking and team work skills, as international students have developed the ability to work efficiently in multi-cultural groups and with other stakeholders such as staff members.

Although international research students in this study have not specified how will they be utilizing their skills in their future profession, either in their home, host or third country, scholars such as Cheung and Xu (2015) argue that many foreign direct investment companies, as well as local companies, do favor and employ international graduates because they have remarkable management skills and international experiences acquired by studying and working overseas.

Conclusion and Implications

The main purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of international research students in relation to vital employability skills for their success in securing employment either in their host, home or third countries. Postgraduate international students identified that research, teaching, technical and project management skills were vital skills for their future career. Soft skills, such as communication skills (both written and oral), interpersonal skills, flexibility, problem-solving and career planning, and personal attributes such as self-confidence and flexibility are necessary ingredients for the development of the skills cited. Their perception of the roles of these skills appears to associate with their specific disciplines, future professions, careers or even the countries of employment. Hence the findings of this study have broadened the understanding of employability skills which are fluid and contextual in accordance with job requirements and opportunities, and explored from international students' perspectives and at a postgraduate education level in a non-Western context. In translating these findings into practice, Malaysian universities (and universities elsewhere) should include international students' voices and perspectives pertaining to their employability as they are the future leaders and innovators who will "make lifelong contributions to their fields and to promote the advancement of their societies" (Campbell et al., 2020, p. 3). Higher education institutions should not only focus on developing employability skills that are relevant to the local markets but also open diverse pathways for students, especially international students, to enter other markets, especially their home countries or even third countries.

There are significant implications in this study for international research students, universities and Malaysian policy makers. As this is one of the first studies to explore employability skills perceptions of postgraduate (research) international students in Malaysia, the Malaysian government could leverage and showcase these positive findings of employability to attract future international students from around the world and thereby strengthen its aspiration to be an international educational hub of education. Malaysian universities should carry on building strategic support services to develop and enhance context-based employability skills of postgraduate (research) international students. They should offer more targeted, planned university events for international students to co-host research workshops, learning and teaching programs, invite industry guest speakers to share knowledge and expertise, as well as extend career services (not only providing assistance in resume writing and interview skills but also offering mentoring and coaching sessions) for postgraduate research international students to develop their vital employability skills to secure successful global employment wherever their career takes them. For such students, these varied findings are valued because students are able to further gauge and develop their employability skills while studying in Malaysia. Alongside building soft skills, they are also able to acquire context-based skills needed for future employment and career development purposes, not only in their home country but also beyond. These findings also provide an avenue for postgraduate international students to understand the importance of not only possessing international qualifications but also of seizing the opportunity to develop their employability skills while studying abroad.

Like many such studies, this study has limitations. It focuses on understanding employability skills through a particular group of international students (postgraduate international students) from one Malaysian research university. Thus, findings cannot be generalized beyond this group of international students. Future studies should consider including other stakeholders such as university staff members (academic and professional staff) as well as employers in order to understand their perceptions of employability skills of international students and graduates. A future study might adopt a quantitative-based approach to determining the importance of the level of skills identified.

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Chapter 6
Perceived Employment Outcome Determinants and Experiences with Employability Development Activities Within Information Technology Engineering Programs in India

Partha Pratim Mitra and Nguyen Phuong Anh

Abstract This chapter reports a study investigating the perceptions of three groups of HE stakeholders, teachers, graduates, and current students, to identify perceived determinants of employment outcomes for Information Technology (IT) graduates in India and factors contributing to low employability among IT engineering graduates. The study showed that although current students, graduates, and teachers agreed on the importance of human, social, and identity capital, their perceptions about the most important determinants are different. While teachers placed importance on human capital and identity capital, students/graduates considered social capital as key for their career development. This chapter discusses some important implications to develop employability for IT students better.

Introduction

Our current world is characterized by rapid technological development. This, in turn, leads to the importance of developing engineers who are capable of using current technologies, adapting to coming technologies, and inventing new ones. As such, training qualified engineers can help address global challenges, enhance the economy, reduce international poverty, and deliver environmental sustainability to a nation (Ashish & Rinku, 2012). In terms of Engineering Practice, engineers are viewed as inventors who have specialized knowledge about specific fields (Blom & Saeki, 2011). They are expected to spend most of their time coping with new challenges that are different from what they have currently learned. Overall, engineering programs

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in higher education are expected to continually strive to prepare students for future markets with skills and the awareness of the rapid changes of the global forces.

Although the engineering labor market is promising, employers are not satisfied with these graduates' quality. The employers agree that graduates possess excellent knowledge and understanding but fall short in dealing with complex tasks as using appropriate tools to solve a problem, thinking out-of-the-box, or communicating effectively (Blom & Saeki, 2011). For example, in Australia, Palmer et al. (2018) used the period 2006–2016 census data to identify the low stock of engineers' employed outcomes. The findings reveal that a large number of fresh engineering graduates were unable to get a job because they could not fulfill the employers' requirements for generic skills. In the United Kingdom and the United States, engineer recruiters demand graduates possess generic skills such as teamwork, integrity, intellectual ability, self-confidence, and communication (Bryson et al., 2018). In an Asian country such as Vietnam, engineering employers are also looking for talented graduates with sufficient engineering knowledge, technical competency, and oral and written communication skills (Pham, 2018). These studies indicate that engineering students would need to be better prepared to meet employers' expectations and sustain their employability for successful career development.

Many engineering schools have been engaging with developing employability skills for their students to address employers' complaints and help engineering graduates secure employment. For example, work-integrated learning (WIL) programs are now included in the curriculum to offer students opportunities to obtain authentic work experiences and develop relevant professional attributes (Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2018). In the United States, the Automotive Manufacturing Technical Education Collaborative (AMTEC) is introduced to engineering students. This program consists of job-ready skills, which are selected based on the recommendation of manufacturers, communities, and technical colleges. Also, work skills are integrated into the curriculum to better vocationalize the technical knowledge and skills of the engineering curricula (Carter et al., 2015; Gleason, 2018). For example, the findings from 5126 students from 31 engineering colleges in the United States supported the role of curriculum-based activities in developing students' communication and leadership skills (Carter et al., 2015). Moreover, numerous extra-curricular activities are also organized to help engineering students practice soft skills (Rottmann et al., 2016). A survey from 34 employers and 41 students in an engineering workshop in Washington DC revealed that extra-curricular activities could improve students' generic skills to tackle challenges in a diverse workforce.

The scenario above can be found in the case of information technology (IT) engineering programs in India. Although the country is famous for IT companies, which create many IT-related jobs for the graduates, there has been an increase in the number of unemployed Indian IT graduates. The "National Employability Report" published by Aspiring Minds in 2016 revealed that most IT graduates did not attain an adequate level of employability. There may be several causes to such a skills gap, including factors from the supply side (students, graduates, and the university), the demand side (employers and recruiters), and the labor market itself (Tran, 2018). However, a mismatch between stakeholders' perception about what contributes to graduates' employment outcomes could also be a critical factor. Such perceptions drive these stakeholders—foremost students and teachers—to behave differently in the teaching and learning for employability. That results in poor learning outcomes, which in turn affects graduates' employment outcomes. Yet, this has not been investigated in the context of IT engineering education in Indian higher education institutions.

In this chapter, we will report a study about engineering teachers', current students', and graduates' perceptions of what contributes to IT engineering graduates' employment outcomes and challenges facing the teaching and learning for employability. This study will contribute to explaining why employability development initiatives in Indian universities' IT engineering programs do not work effectively. Based on that, it will discuss practical implications so that the employability agenda in IT engineering programs can progress faster. The chapter will begin with a review on employability concepts, employability components, and their relation to employment outcomes. Then it reviews the history and current situation of IT engineering programs in India, setting the context of the book chapter. After a section about the research design and methods, the chapter will report the three groups of stakeholders' perceptions of determinants of employment outcomes for IT engineering graduates in India. The chapter will end with a discussion of the findings and provision of practical implications to improve IT engineering students' and graduates' employability and employment outcomes.

Literature Review

Employability Concepts, Employability Capitals, and Employment Outcomes

It is generally agreed that employability is "the skills, understanding and personal attributes that make them more likely to secure employment and be successful in their chosen occupation to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy" (Yorke, 2006, p. 8). Adding to this definition, Oliver (2015) proposes that employability is how graduates adapt and enhance their skills and knowledge to find and create paid and unpaid work that can benefit both the individuals and their community.

Similarly, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) present a broad framework of employability comprising individual factors like skills and attributes, personal circumstances, and external factors such as employers' perspectives. Tomlinson (2017) proposes a framework of employability capital that graduates should possess to compete successfully in the labor market: human capital, social capital, cultural capital, identity capital, and psychological capital. According to him, all these interactive forms of capital add to the benefits and advantages of graduates in improving employability.

Firstly, human capital starts with the individual's fundamental belief and feeling as age, work experience, job performance, emotional intelligence, and cognitive ability that would be relevant for a person's future employment (Fugate et al., 2004). Examples of human capital are problem-solving, teamwork, and critical thinking skills (Clarke, 2017). Next, social capital highlights the influence of a secure social network, and friendships can help individuals find out more about job opportunities (Fugate et al., 2004). The importance of civil societies and the influence of such societies on social networks and democracies can also affect future career outcomes (Tomlinson, 2017). Thirdly, cultural capital considers the belief and the confidence of the individual about their cultural knowledge, behaviors, and dispositions to fit into their organizations (Tomlinson, 2017). This capital is an essential requirement in the most domestic and international workplace (Hora & Blacburn Cohen, 2018). Besides, identity capital where the individual spends much time and energy planning for future careers, career insight, and proactive labor market engagement (Tomlinson, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary that the individual works toward strengthening his ability to influence the job market in a globalizing world with a clear goal, hope, and beliefs (Fugate et al., 2004). Finally, psychological capital, such as adaptability, flexibility, and resilience, plays an essential part in helping the individual navigate and transition between different career development stages (Badran & Youssef-Morgan, 2015; Clarke, 2017).

However, the current employability agenda in higher education seems to focus on developing human capital for the student. Little attention has been paid to build students' social capital and identity capitals through community service learning, work-integrated learning at the workplace, or international student exchange programs (Bridgstock et al., 2018; Oliver, 2015; Potts, 2015). Extra-curricular activities have been used to develop different soft skills such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork skills, or leadership skills, which constitute a larger part of their employability (Tran, 2017a, 2017b). However, not all students participate in such activities, and there may not be such activities available to all students. It is also noted that having employability capital does not mean that graduates will be able to secure employment. It will depend much on labor market factors and how they can demonstrate their capitals relevant to a job's requirement to prospective employers (Roberts & Li, 2017; Tran, 2018).

Initiatives to Develop Employability for Students in Higher Education

Universities are developing employability for students in various ways. First, several work-readiness skills or generic skills have been embedded into the formal curricula and imparted to students alongside technical knowledge and skills (Oliver, 2015). Messum et al. (2016) commented that this approach shows the potential to improve graduates' attributes that can enhance students' employment outcomes. Second, work-integrated learning has been used as a part of the curriculum to narrow the gap between theories at school and real-life work situations and monitored by a school leader (Jackson, 2018). Students look for unpaid work as internships to gain more experiences and connections with potential employers (Jackling & Natoli, 2015; Silva et al., 2018). Third, many higher education institutions from East to West have used extra-curricular activities to improve students' employability skills (Steinmann et al., 2018; Tran, 2017a). These activities contain community services, volunteering programs, serving committees, field trips, and certain skill-focused clubs (Barrie et al., 2009; Osman, 2011; Tran, 2017a). Fourth, career guidance is a vital factor in engaging students in their personal and professional development. Student career support services have been established to help students achieve labor market demands and lifelong learning (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013). In the United Kingdom, career services are considered a long-standing tradition (Watermeyer et al., 2016).

Despite the progress, the implementation of the employability agenda in tertiary education institutions has faced several challenges. Firstly, it is not easy to embed employability skills into the traditional curriculum. The main reasons are the differences in conceptualizing generic skills among the tertiary educational contexts and misunderstanding the relationship between technical and generic skills (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009). Secondly, work-integrated learning has been included in the curriculum, but it has not worked effectively. Notably, due to a lack of internship opportunities caused by a shortage of network with industries (Tran, 2017a), many students have not completed enough work-integrated learning experiences before completing their degrees (Gardner, 2013). Thirdly, despite the benefits of extra-curricular activities such as service-learning activities, voluntary works, and specific skills development classes, students still consider them as "extra" and underestimate these activities (Tran, 2017b). Fourthly, students often lack proper assistance and guidance to manage their career development during their time at the university. Student career services strongly depend on the university's funds and struggle with finding the sponsor from external stakeholders to maintain the organization (Harman, Hayden & Pham, 2010), so they impossibly provide immediate support to students. Part-time job opportunities under this career service are limited, and students find it hard to balance work and study (Gbadamosi et al., 2015). Finally, there is a lack of leadership and management for graduate employability initiatives (de la Harpe & David, 2012). In particular, the teaching staff is not prepared enough to teach employability; thus, they do not feel confident to impart employability skills. Other issues such as a lack of incentives, class sizes, and a shortage of time also discourage teachers in this task (Barrie et al., 2009; Tran, 2017a).

Consequently, although the employability agenda has been launched for a long time in many countries, graduates' unemployment rate continues to rise. According to the International Labour Organization (2018), although the global unemployment percentage has stabilized since 2016, the unemployment rate stays persistently high in many developing countries. For example, the unemployment rate in India remains around 3.5% from 2016–2018. In Vietnam, nearly 60% of university graduates work in jobs unrelated to their previous majors because of lacking adequate skills (Nguyen, Ngoc & Montague, 2019). All of these suggest that it is time to review the implementation of graduate employability in tertiary education to identify the obstacles, remove them and help the implementation progress. In that way, the issue of increased unemployment among university graduates can be resolved.

The Context of the Study: Engineering Education in India

In 1991, the Indian economy made a turning point in its industrial policy (Rodrik, 2008). The government removed the restrictions on individual investment and opened for foreign investment in IT trading, which helped India reach the second-largest and fastest-growing country globally (Byres, 1997). For instance, in 2014, The National Association of Software and Services Companies presented that IT contributed 109 billion USD for the industry's revenue. This industry is effectively connected to a wide range of technology services, enhancing products and data entry for different firms (Suma, 2005). Additionally, Sharma and Sharma (2015) point out that the IT industry adequately supports major Indian projects as banking operations, office networking, telecom infrastructure, and transport reservation to bring positive impacts for both government and community. Conclusively, the impacts of the IT industry on Indian economic development are remarkable.

Due to the growing IT industry, India also has a wide range of engineering educational institutions to train students in IT-related fields. The primary requirement to enter the Polytechnic courses is passing the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE). After getting the school's admission, students register from six to ten practical courses and 25–30 theory courses. Apart from these courses, postgraduate students can focus on research. Additionally, the higher educational institutions have designed an appropriate curriculum to develop students' technical skills and generic skills to help students face challenges in the real workplace (Ghouse et al., 2018). For instance, Indian IT students have plenty of extra-curricular activities such as Sports, the National Service Scheme (NSS) to help their community services, or the Red Cross society for blood donation to choose from.

Despite those investments, the unemployment rate of engineering graduates in India appeared to rise. According to the latest report of a Labour Bureau survey covered a total of 156,563 households in 36 states and union territories of India during the period March to December 2015, only 55% of engineering graduates were employed, whereas 11.6% attempted to look for a job but unsuccessfully secured one. Similarly, The National Employability Report 2016 from Aspiring Minds showed low employability among engineering college graduates. Individually 150, 000 IT graduates from over 650 engineering colleges all over India participated in the Aspiring Minds Computer Adaptive Test (AMCAT). The results revealed that most engineers (over 70%) lacked employability as English communication, quantitative aptitude, problem-solving skills, and knowledge of domain areas. Moreover, Sharma and Sharma (2015), Sheikh (2017) and Sinha et al. (2019) indicated that the curriculum did not meet the job demands such as hand-on skills and work-integrated experiences when entering the market. The problem was that HE mainly focused on human capital like certifications instead of providing enough internships or placements for students. Consequently, the total number of Indian engineering colleges just slightly came down from 3371 in 2012–3124 in 2018, according to the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE).

There could be several factors contributing to the mentioned skill gap, such as traditional curriculum, student disengagement (Mishra & Mishra, 2018; Neroorkar & Gopinath, 2019), the social relationship-based recruitment practice in India (Sheikh, 2017; Sinha et al., 2019), and a lack of career support services or work-integrated learning (Tran, 2018). Yet, a critical cause of the skills gap can possibly be the mismatch among stakeholders' perspectives about determinants of IT graduates' employment outcomes. Without alignment in their perspectives, efforts invested in developing employability for IT students in India would not yield positive results. Thus, this issue needs to be further explored to lay a foundation for improving employability development initiatives for IT students in Indian higher education institutions.

Research Design and Method

The study reported in this chapter investigated IT engineering teachers', current students' and graduates' perceptions about what contributes to IT engineering graduates' employment outcomes. The study also aimed to identify the most challenges in developing employability for IT engineering students in India. The research questions were:

- What are the determinants of employment outcomes for IT engineering graduates in India in academics', students' and graduates' perception?
- What are the challenges of developing employability for IT engineering students in India in their perception?

This study was conducted as a qualitative study because it can effectively investigate and understand individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and experiences regarding a phenomenon in their own setting (Merriam, 2009). Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews with IT teachers, current engineering students, and graduates. Participants were studying or working at New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, and Bhubaneswar, which represents the northern, southern, and eastern parts of the country. A stratified sampling approach was adopted in recruiting participants from institutions with different levels of reputation in IT training. The participants were recruited from:

- Indian Institutes of Technology (New Delhi), belonging to the first-tiered institutions.
- Jadavpur University (Kolkata, WestBengal), belonging to the second-tiered institutions;

Table 6.1 Participants and institutions

Type of institution	Institution's name	Student	Graduate	Teacher
First-tiered institution	Indian Institutes of Technology	1(M)	1(M)	1(M)
Second-tiered institutions	Jadavpur University	1(M)	1(F)	1(F)
	Anna University	1(M)	1(M)	1(M)
Third-tiered institutions	Techno India College of Technology	1(M)	1(M)	–
	Heritage Institute of Technology	1(M)	–	1(F)
	Kalinga University	–	1(F)	1(M)

Note M = male, F = female

- Anna University (Chennai, Tamilnadu), belonging to the second-tiered institutions;
- Kalinga University (Bhubaneswar, Odisha), belonging to the third-tiered institutions,
- Techno India College of Technology (Kolkata, WestBengal), belonging to the third-tiered institutions
- Heritage Institute of Technology (Kolkata, WestBengal), belonging to the third-tiered institutions.

For each tier of institutions, five participants (teachers, current students, and graduates) were interviewed. The demographic information of the participants is summarized in the Table 6.1.

The participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their roles, and how their identities would be protected. The participants were asked to give consent to the researchers to use the data for the study. The interviews were conducted either by phone or face-to-face, depending on participants' choice. In the interviews, participants were asked to express their view on what contributes to IT engineering graduates' employment outcomes in the current context of India and explain why they thought so. They were also asked to discuss prominent issues that they had experienced regarding developing employability for IT students. All interviews were note-taken instead of recorded, following participants' requests as they were critiquing their institutions.

Throughout the interviews, the lead researcher listened attentively and took notes on what participants said. He also repeated participants' ideas to ensure that he understood and noted them precisely. At the end of the interviews, he gave the notes to the participants to check the notes' reliability. When all interviews were done, the lead researcher reread the notes groups by groups to identify the main themes corresponding to the research questions. He also compared and contrasted perspectives between groups of teachers, current students, and graduates as well as between groups of participants from the three tiers of institutions. Finally, the findings were incorporated into a report.

Results of the Study

Students' Perspectives

The students from the first- and the second-tiered institutions did not consider degrees or certificates important for their employment outcomes. In contrast, students from the third tier of the engineering education system felt that the degree, certificate, and scores were essential to get a job relevant to their qualifications. This emphasized the importance of social capital attached to the affiliation that a graduate has, as mentioned in Tomlinson (2017). In India, the national and state-run engineering institutions have a higher status and privilege. Thus their graduates are naturally considered more employable than those from the third-tiered institutions.

Students in all three types of institutions believed that it was a plus to possess hands-on experience in writing the CV because these skills would enhance their opportunities to meet employers' expectations. Likewise, they believed that possessing good job interview skills would enhance the possibility of convincing employers to give them jobs. They all agreed that work, volunteer, and internship experiences as well as technical knowledge and skills were essential elements of employability. In their views, these experiences could expand their social network with professionals, develop an understanding of work culture and a sense of belonging to the industry as well as nurture psychological qualities necessary for career development such as adaptability, flexibility, and patience.

In terms of the most prominent challenges of developing employability for students, the interviewed students seemed to focus on two issues. On the one hand, students wanted their institution to pay more attention to developing work-readiness skills, such as soft skills and job interview skills, which may assist them with the first employment endeavor.

> The college should arrange to conduct mock interviews with professional recruiters (P01, student, Indian Institute of Technology)
>
> The college needs to give a lot of attention to soft skills (P02, student, Jadavpur University)

On the other hand, students wanted their institution to pay more attention to connect them with industry. For example, they suggested that their institutions should organize opportunities for them to meet employers, send them to internships to develop practical skills, or network with graduates to understand more about the IT industries and job opportunities.

> The college must reorient its curriculum and give emphasis on industry linkage (P03, student, Anna University)

> The college needs to ensure students develop soft skills, organize mock interviews and group discussions with graduates to increase employability (P04, student, TechnoIndia College)

Students also mentioned the role of work-integrated learning in developing their employability. Accordingly, they believed that a focus on training in the IT industry would give them more practical work experience and relevant learning.

> The college needs to focus much more on training in the industry (P05, student, Heritage Institute of Technology)

None of the students mentioned anything about their personal issues that prevented them from developing employability.

Graduates' Perspectives

Like students, the graduates highlighted a variety of determinants of employment outcomes. They noted that human capital—knowledge, skills, and personal attributes—was an important determinant for employers' hiring decisions. However, what they discussed the most during the interviews was the role of social capital. They reported that the internship offered them several opportunities to develop a network with professionals and prospective employers in the IT industry. They also stressed the usefulness of participating in career fairs where they could meet many graduates, professionals, recruiters, and employers. They could network with them for future access to job information or at least receive some advice from these people. They believed that such social relationships allowed them to reflect on their studies and acquired skills, figure out what job might be matched with their skills set, or if they wanted to apply for a job, what they needed to attain. All of these in turn helped boost their chance to be employed. The role of social networks is also discussed in terms of assistance from family members. In many cases, the mentioned people could at least be used as a referee in the CV.

Interestingly and consistently with the students' viewpoint, social capital related to the credential they received from the institutions was crucial for their employment. According to Tomlinson (2017), affiliation with an institution can be a kind of social capital. Indeed, in this study, the three-tier hierarchical system of engineering education in India seemed to have left its noticeable impact on the graduates' employment outcomes. Graduates from lesser-known colleges, either in the state-run system or the private system, believed that their credential was not of great values compared to one granted by a national institution. Therefore, they gave importance to a combination of the credential, other certificates, and average grade points as evidence for competition in the labor market. Conversely, graduates from better-known colleges did not emphasize the degrees, certificates, or scores because they knew that their degrees were already quite well known in the job market. These graduates seemed to emphasize career planning, work-integrated learning experience, either in the workplace or in a computer lab.

Regarding challenges of developing employability for IT students in India, graduates reflected on their former studies' experience and suggested several aspects that need to be tackled. First, graduates from the lesser-known colleges believed that their teachers do not teach well, mostly focused on theory rather than practice. They reported that there was a dearth of professors who advised them on career planning, helped them develop soft skills, and encouraged meaningful learning experiences. Instead, they experienced a learning culture that focused on memorizing, which is known commonly as rote learning. They explained that good teachers often left these institutions for better institutions. As a result, they experienced a gap between what had been taught during the four year and what was required at work. They believed that providing more internships in the industry would help students develop an adequate employability level that meets future employers' demands.

> The college needs to focus on better industry linkage, which would make courses more job and practice-oriented. (P07, graduate, Jadavpur University).
>
> The college will do well if it forges better industry linkage, which would add to the practical dimension of the courses (P08, graduate, Anna University)

Second, students also commented on issues related to the curricula. In their opinion, the IT curricula were not flexible enough that prevented students from developing the knowledge and skills that they wanted to enter a specific area of the IT industry. Therefore, they suggested that IT curricula must flexibly include electives and use internships instead of using too many compulsory theory-based subjects.

> The college needs to put more emphasis on industry linkage and ensure that students gain practical experience, which would help them in the job market. It should also rope in more recruiters, put focus on soft skills and offer flexibility in choosing elective courses, giving students a wider domain knowledge (P10, graduate, Kalinga University)
>
> The college must arrange more soft skills training, provide internship opportunities, focus on industry-oriented skill development (P09, graduate, TechnoIndia College)

As such, like students, graduates believed that a tighter connection with the IT industry would enhance the quality of employability development for students. None of them mentioned issues related to them.

Teachers' Perspectives

Resembling students' and graduates' perspectives, the teachers believed that technical knowledge and skills, soft skills, and attributes were what employers look for. They also asserted that graduates' employment outcomes could be determined by their social network with people, especially with the recruiters or employers. However, teachers from all three tiers were concerned about students' ability to plan and manage their careers. They explained that to fight against an oversupply of IT graduates, a well-devised career development plan and career management skills would help students develop relevant employability skills, find jobs relevant to their expertise, and connect with people in those job sectors. Consequently, all of these elements would significantly enhance IT graduates' possibility of getting the job they want, rather than luck.

In the interviews, teachers mentioned three main issues related to the effective development of employability for IT students. Teachers believed that the current curriculum has not yet adequately met industrial demand and opened to a wider career choice for students. They suggested that the curriculum must be re-designed to incorporate industrial needs and prepare students for a job in the government, too, rather than just focus on private IT companies.

> The course curriculum should have more industry-orientation. (P12, teacher, Jadavpur University)
>
> The college needs to give special guidance to students who want to join government civil services. (P14, teacher, Heritage Institute of Technology)

The teachers were also concerned about the current teaching practice for the delivery of IT curricula. They endorsed that internship was the best way to develop employability for students but lamented a lack of opportunities for student internships due to a lack of existing connections with IT companies. In their opinion, the more and the earlier internships are organized, the better chance students will meet employers' expectations.

> The college needs to create more opportunities for internships so that they become job-ready at the end of the course. (P13, teacher, Anna University)
>
> It must encourage internships at the end of the third year and the fourth year. (P12, teacher, Jadavpur University)

Even so, some teachers were worried about the quality of student supervision during the internship. Partially it was due to the supervisor's experience in overseeing interns, but it was primarily due to a lack of collaboration between those supervisors and teachers in the institutions. Both are busy with their business or teaching workload, respectively.

A number of teachers also found that students were not aware of the necessity of developing employability skills. Therefore, they believe that the curricula need to focus on equipping students with career management skills, as reported above, and practical skills that may enhance their chance of securing employment, such as CV writing and job interview skills. They also believed that it is beneficial to send students to the industry to learn about industrial needs by themselves.

> The college needs to form better industry-academic relationships to showcase the relevant skills of students and to better understand the nature of the jobs that are in demand (P11, teacher, Indian Institute of Technology)

Specifically, teachers in the third tier of IT institutions found several challenges hindering their teaching of employability for students. The teachers reported that there were too many students in a class, and thus they could not take care of their students properly. In their explanation, this was primarily because third-tier colleges, being in the private sector, adopted a commercial approach in their operation. As such, they enrolled more students than the number of teachers could handle. This resulted in a heavy teaching workload for teachers, leaving no time for them to partake in employability development activities with their students, such as providing career advice, coaching students, or organizing extra-curricular activities.

Discussion

This study aimed to report perceived determinants and challenges that contribute to the Indian IT engineering graduates' employment outcomes based on the stakeholders' perspectives. The semi-structured interviews with participants—teachers, current students, and graduates—of six Indian institutions reveal different employability capitals that can benefit graduates in the labor market. As demonstrated by qualitative results, human capital, social capital, and identity capital are perceived to play an important role in an IT graduate's employability. This finding supports the framework made by Tomlinson (2017) that these interactive forms of capital can contribute to the employment rate.

In addition, this study found a mismatch between students/graduates' and their teachers' perceptions of the most important determinants of employment outcomes. For instance, students from the national and state-run universities did not consider human capital, such as degree or certificates, but social capital as the key contributor to enhancing their employment prospects. Students believed that by expanding their social network, they could understand the work culture and nurture psychological qualities. Similarly, the most highlighted determinant among graduates appeared to be social capital rather than human capital. They tended to discuss the role of developing a social network for employment purposes with professionals, employers, recruiters, and other graduates via internships and career fairs. Students' and graduates' emphasis on the role of social capital very well reflects the strong influence of social relationships in business in India, as documented in previous studies (Neroorkar & Gopinath, 2019; Sheikh, 2017; Sinha et al., 2019). Unlike students and graduates, the teachers in this study believed that human capital is what employers looked for and was concerned about the importance of identity capital rather than social capital.

On the one hand, such misalignment in their perception of the determinants of employment outcomes could partially explain for the skill gap of IT graduates in India in recent years. Possibly not recognizing such perception misalignment, teachers blamed students for not devoting enough time to develop technical knowledge and skills or develop a careful career development plan whereas students blamed their institutions for not providing enough internships to connect with the target industry. Such a blame game between higher education stakeholders was detected in previous studies (e.g., Tran, 2018). As a result, this perceptual mismatch could negatively affect employability teaching and learning since their beliefs or perceptions may drive their behavioral engagement with developing employability capitals (Mishra & Mishra, 2018; Neroorkar & Gopinath, 2019). On the other hand, the misalignment in their perception can be explained by Bourdieu's concepts of social fields and habitus (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The former can be simply understood as the social structure or social context in which a person or a group of people function; it forms norms and expectations that people should abide (Bourdieu, 1998). The latter is their ways of thinking, believing and actioning as the result of functioning in the social field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this study, students' and graduates' perception appeared to be influenced by their observation that in Indian culture, social relationships are more critical in securing employment than qualifications (Sheikh, 2017; Sinha et al., 2019). Although they understood that human capital is important, in their position, social network may be a better practical way to successfully and quickly secure their first graduate jobs. Teachers' perception appeared to be influenced by their standpoint as educators who would like to contribute to produce a quality workforce and their vision to prepare students for a long-term career instead of a quick grasp of an employment.

Moreover, consistent with other studies in the literature (Bridgstock et al., 2018; Oliver, 2015; Potts, 2015), the present study found that the IT curricula in Indian universities were not flexible enough, which prevented students from developing knowledge and skills, as noted in Ghouse et al. (2018). The stakeholders' experiences revealed that the current curriculum failed to adequately meet industrial demand and offer a wide choice of career for students, which is also noted in Sharma and Sharma (2015), Sheikh (2017), and Sinha et al. 2019). On top of that, the role of work-integrated learning was underestimated. Students wanted their institutions to pay more attention to develop work-readiness for them. For instance, courses that develop soft skills and job interview skills, workshops to meet employers, and internships to connect with professionals should be organized frequently. If these can be implemented well, students will become work-ready with all employability capital being equipped, as suggested by studies in other contexts (Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2018; Rottmann et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the teachers' use of methodology was not so effective for preparing IT students for the world of work. They mostly focused on transmitting theoretical knowledge rather than helping students develop skills. The main reasons for this problem were the massive number of enrolled students in a classroom and the time limitation for teaching. The teachers reported that there were too many students in a class; thus, they could not take care of their students properly or have enough time to participate in activities that may relevantly develop employability skills for students such as career, advice, and coaching students, organizing extra-curricular activities, etc. The findings were in line with other studies in Indian HE contexts (Sharma & Sharma, 2015; Sheikh, 2017) and international contexts (Barrie et al., 2009; Tran, 2017a) in that a shortage of time and incentives and large class sizes discouraged teachers from teaching employability to their students. Therefore, a learning culture that focused on memorizing is hard to develop soft skills and meaningful learning experiences. This leads to a gap between what had been taught during the four years and what was required at work.

Implications for Employability Development Programs in Higher Education

This study has two major implications for teaching and learning for employability in higher education, particularly Indian IT programs. First, against the fact that higher education focuses on developing human capital for students, this study found an important role of social capital and professional identity in determining graduates' market success, although they were just in stakeholders' perception. Thus, universities should employ work-integrated learning (WIL) into their curriculum to foster the development of graduates' employability via these types of capital in addition to human capital (Bridgstock et al., 2018; Oliver, 2015; Potts, 2015). With WIL, students will learn a real workplace setting to develop hands-on skills (Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2018), understand the workplace culture, identify their career paths, and diversify their social circle (Roberts & Li, 2017; Tran, 2018).

Second, the mismatch between teachers' and students' perceptions about employment outcomes determinants can lead to ineffectiveness in learning and teaching for employability in IT programs. Thus, it is vital to align their perceptions with that of industry stakeholders. Since graduates and employers are those who best know which skills are needed in the IT industry, it will be useful to organize activities for both teachers and students to meet with employers and graduates: career expos, having teachers to work with employers in supervising student internship, having graduates to share their journeys to employment to both teachers and students (Neroorkar & Gopinath, 2019; Sinha et al., 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, by investigating perceptions of three groups of Higher Education (HE) stakeholders, teachers, graduates, and current students, we identified perceived determinants of employment outcomes for IT graduates in India and found factors contributing to low employability among IT engineering graduates. Although current students, graduates, and teachers agreed on the importance of human, social, and identity capitals, their perceptions of the most important determinants differ. While teachers focused on human capital and identity capital, students/graduates considered social capital key for their career development. Therefore, findings from this study suggest that universities should connect with the graduates through workshops or conferences as well as employ WIL into their curricula to help both teachers and students update employers' expectations and market demands. Although this chapter contributes to the limited studies about perceived employment determinants and experiences with employability development in India, the small sample size (15 participants) could have affected the data and the findings. Future studies can address these limitations by including more students, teachers, graduates, and also employers from institutions across the country to make it more generalizable. Comparing the perceptions of Indian's stakeholders involved in IT engineering education about employment determinants with those in other countries may also generate more insights about local and global perspectives.

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Chapter 7
Vietnamese Employers' and Graduates' Perspectives on Essential Skills for Students of Hospitality

Tran Le Huu Nghia, Nguyen Thi My Duyen, and Chau Soryaly

Abstract This chapter reports a study that examined essential employability skills for hospitality graduates in Vietnam using employers' and graduates' perspectives. Data included 26 interviews and 128 responses to an online survey with employers and graduates. The results showed that technical knowledge and skills, soft skills, management skills, leadership skills, and professional development skills were rated as either 'important' or 'highly important' by the participants. The identified skills can be used to tailor the hospitality curriculum to better prepare students for their future work roles in the industry. The chapter also explains the findings with reference to the socio-economic and cultural contexts of Vietnam and the hospitality industry in the country.

Introduction

Graduate employability has been a concern in higher education in recent decades. "Employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work. More comprehensively employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labor market to realize potential through sustainable employment" (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, p. 2). As such, employability does not only mean that graduates can secure jobs relevant to their studies but also means that they are able to thrive with it. Securing a full-time employment opportunity upon graduation is considered initial evidence of graduate employability. Unfortunately, several studies have indicated that many graduates fail to meet employers' expectations of their employability skills

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(Hurrell, 2016; Lindorff, 2011; Llorens et al., 2013). This supply–demand mismatch is mainly caused by the disparities between what is being taught at the university and what is needed in the workplace (Hurrell, 2016; Tran, 2018a). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the perspectives of people in industries of what they seek in graduates and modify the training programs at the university accordingly to enhance graduates' employment prospects.

Hospitality education was mainly delivered by on-the-job training in hotels and restaurants, with a strong vocational focus (Le et al., 2018). Thus, the connection between hospitality programs and related industries is vital for developing and delivering a relevant curriculum, which can ensure both the quality of the training program and graduates' employment outcomes. In the case of hospitality in Vietnam, there has been an increase in demand for a quality workforce to serve the booming industry's needs (Khuong et al., 2017). A limited number of hospitality studies in Vietnam, mostly in conjunction with tourism, suggested that hospitality employees are not adequately qualified to satisfy customers' needs and thrive in their careers. While there is a lack of empirical studies that determine the causes, we believe that it is a direct result of the mismatch between what students are trained via the curriculum and what employers need, as Vietnamese universities have long been criticized for disconnecting with industries (Tran, 2009, 2018a).

The study reported in this chapter was conducted to identify skills that Vietnamese hospitality graduates working in restaurants need to perform their job effectively, using employers' and graduates' perspectives. Theoretically, our study expands knowledge about relevant skills for hospitality students in such a developing country like Vietnam. The study also explains why participants perceive the importance of these skills, using Bourdieu's concepts of social and habitus (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Practically, the study helps hospitality programs to modify their curricula and training activities to better match what is being taught with what is being needed in the industry, improving the quality of the hospitality industry in Vietnam.

Literature Review

An Employability Skills Framework for Hospitality Students

Hospitality is a massive industry and exists in all countries across the globe. Mostly provided by hotels, restaurants, and bars, it includes many services such as accommodation, food, and drink services, event planning, theme parks, and transportation. Often thought of as a catering service to tourists and food/drink lovers, the profession may be looked down on as a low-pay, low-status job that can be the last option of job seekers (for example, see Williamson, 2017). However, in order for graduates to perform the job effectively and thrive in it as a career, it requires students to undergo formal training to acquire relevant bodies of knowledge and skills as well as a vision about their career prospects. This is essential when the hospitality industry is becoming more involved with diverse groups of customers. Globalization, with ease in cross-border travel policies and advancement in transport and communication, has increased the number of non-local customers (Gustafson, 2009). Likewise, socio-economic development appears to heighten people's demands for what and how to be served. 'Today's guests actively seek superior-quality, customized yet consistent hospitality experiences which integrate a subtle culture-specific novelty with a certain acceptable level of service and product quality' (Jauhari et al., 2012, p. 155). All of these place a pressing need for hospitality graduates to obtain appropriate knowledge and skills so that they can work professionally and advance in their chosen careers.

Several studies have been conducted to identify skills or competencies that hospitality graduates should possess to perform their work duties effectively. On top of specialized/technical skills related to food, beverage, and room services, most studies revealed that soft skills/generic skills are vital for graduates to function well in the industry (Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Ruetzler et al., 2014; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Spowart, 2011). For example, conducting their study in the USA, Sisson and Adams (2013) found that 86% of the skills identified to be important for managers in lodging, food, and beverage, and meeting and event management belonged to the soft skill category. Other researchers also reported the importance of leadership skills, especially for those working in management and leadership roles (Suh et al., 2012). With the development of information technology, IT skills are recognized as increasingly essential skills in the hospitality industry (Bilgihan et al., 2014). Aligned with an increasing focus on career management skills in employability literature, researchers also explored the role of career planning skills in relation to hospitality graduates' employability (Hertzman et al., 2015).

However, it is recognized that most studies in hospitality only focus on a specific set of skills instead of identifying a full set of skills that hospitality graduates need. As mentioned earlier, employability is not only about readiness for a specific job position but also about long-term development within the occupational sector. In this regard, Wang and Tsai (2014) provided an employability framework for hospitality students, comprising seven skill categories. The author classified these skill categories hierarchically into two major competencies: personal competency and job competency. The former includes core skills and career planning and development skills. The latter embraces fundamental competency (work attitudes and personal attributes) and functional competency (leadership, professional management, and technical skills).

We acknowledge that this is a comprehensive employability framework for hospitality students up to now. However, we believe that there is no clear-cut boundary between skills and skill categories. Many scholars have argued that skills are interrelated (Bowman, 2010; Hager & Holland, 2006; Tran, 2019), especially when they are utilized to achieve a specific purpose. Therefore, in our study, we adopted Wang and Tsai's (2014) employability framework, with some modifications. First, we combine core skills, work attitudes, and personal attributes into one category named soft skills (as opposed to technical/specialized knowledge and skills), as Wang and Tsai (2014)

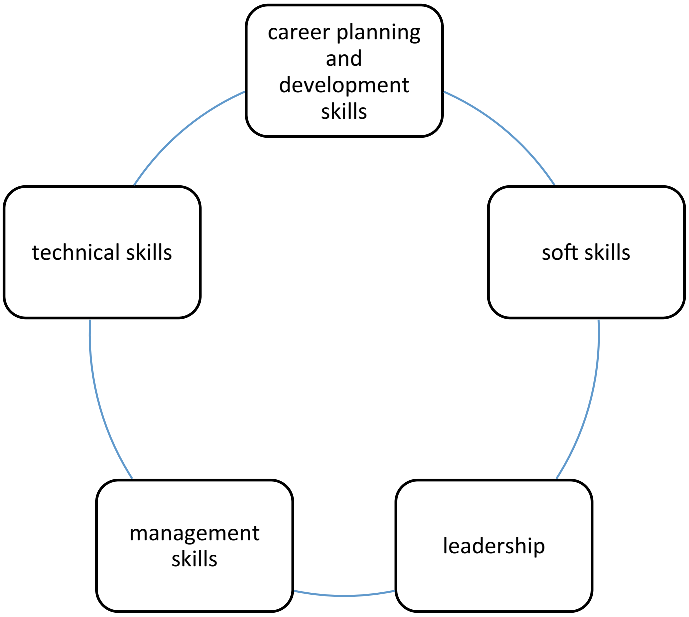

Fig. 7.1 Conceptual employability framework for hospitality students

also noted in their work. Second, we present the skill category in a way that shows their interconnectedness instead of being hierarchical (Fig. 7.1).

Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Vietnam and Demands for a Skilled Workforce

Together with recent socio-economic growth, the tourism industry in Vietnam is booming. In 2005, approximately 3.4 million international tourists visited the country; the number doubled in 2015, reaching 7.9 million in 2015 (Khuong et al., 2017). Tourism has become a vital service exporter in Vietnam, generating US$7.3 billion to the national economy in 2014 (Khuong et al., 2017).

In 2013, the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism prepared the Master Plan for Tourism Development to 2020 and Visions to 2030, aiming to make tourism a spearhead among its industries (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2013). Overall, the plan is to turn the current tourism industry into a well-developed one, making Vietnam an attractive destination in Asia by 2030. It targets to serve 10.5 million foreign tourists and 47.5 million domestic tourists. The plan also hopes that with reasonable investment, the tourism industry will generate about US$18.5 billion in 2020 and US$26.6 billion in 2025 (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2013). Both the government and foreign investors have been exerted efforts to develop the tourism and hospitality industry in recent years (Le et al., 2018), signifying a brighter prospect for the Vietnamese tourism industry.

Specifically, the hospitality industry in Vietnam has been booming alongside with rapid development of the tourism sector. In a study by Do and Nguyen (2016), they indicated in 2015, the total number of 3-star to 5-star hotels solely in Khanh Hoa province is 625, and they need more than 35,000 employees, of which 14,000 for working in housekeeping positions, desk, bar, and kitchen. However, it was challenging to recruit staff due to a shortage in the number and skill levels of hospitality graduates. It was reported that graduates' foreign language skills were not adequately proficient while their teamwork and communication skills were too weak to deal with customers directly.

In fact, some efforts have been invested in developing human resources for the hospitality industry. A couple of studies identified or evaluated skills necessary for hospitality students. Generally, they found that institutions should equip students with professional ethics, vocational and technical skills, creativity, life skills, teamwork skills, and foreign language skills, and therefore, they need to prepare well by themselves and universities (Nguyen, 2016). Some studies also reported the initiatives launched to develop relevant skills for students, including internships, practicum, and field trips (Khuong et al., 2017; Le et al., 2018).

Still, employers keep complaining about the shortage of hospitality graduates, both in quantity and quality. There was a considerable gap between the training outcomes and the actual needs of the employers—reflecting on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that these students demonstrated (Khuong et al., 2017; Nguyen, 2016, 2017). Similarly, most employers had to retrain graduates to effectively perform the job (Do & Nguyen, 2016). Researchers have provided different recommendations for improving students' learning outcomes. Le (2017) emphasized the necessity of collaboration between institutions and industry in developing relevant knowledge and skills for students. Nguyen (2017) and Nguyen (2016) believed that it is important to embed and deliver essential skills that employers want to students, such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills. However, there is still a lack of studies that explore industry stakeholders' perspectives about a full set of skills that hospitality graduates in Vietnam should possess to work effectively and thrive in their careers. Without such a skill set, the effort to renovate hospitality program curricula may not yield the expected effects.

The Present Study

To contribute to improving the quality of hospitality program curricula, the study reported in this chapter aims to identify knowledge and skills essential for hospitality graduates working in hotel-restaurants in Vietnam, the very first task to hospitality program improvement. In particular, the study seeks to answer the following question:

- What skills are important for hospitality students working in hotel-restaurants in Vietnam, in graduates' and employers' perspectives?

This study was carried out as a mixed-method study, which includes both qualitative research and quantitative methods, to increase the robustness of findings (De Lisle, 2011). The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase aimed to explore employers' and graduates' perceptions of essential employability skills that contribute to a satisfying and successful hospitality job. The second phase aimed to measure the importance level of these skills and compare it between the two groups of participants' perceptions. This helped determine which skills are more important and should be focused on when hospitality programs are delivered.

Phase 1

Qualitative data were collected by semi-structured interviews with 11 employers and 15 graduates working in Vietnam's hospitality industry. Interviewees were recruited by email, which explained the research purpose, their role in the research, and how their identities would be protected. The interviewees aged from 21 to 58, with work experience ranging from 3–15 years. The interview questions were developed based on the conceptual framework mentioned in the literature review (adapted from Wang and Tsai [2014]). Generally, interviewees were invited to discuss vital skills that enhance their hospitality industry career in the following domains: technical skills, management skills, leadership skills, soft skills, and career planning and development skills. The interviews lasted from 10 to 38 min, with an average of approximately 20 min. All interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using a content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). First, each interview transcript was repeatedly reviewed for content. They were coded based on the skill sets in the framework proposed in the literature review (Fig. 7.1). Skills mentioned to be important for hospitality students by the interviewees were picked up and grouped following Wang and Tsai's (2014) categorization. While analyzing the data, the team also paid attention to skills that are particularly essential for Vietnam's hospitality industry and put them in a suitable category under Wang and Tsai's (2014) framework.

Phase 2

Quantitative data were collected by an online survey, which was also developed based on Wang and Tsai's (2014) work and our findings from the interviews in phase 1. Participants were asked to rate the importance of skills for hospitality graduates on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (highly unimportant) to 5 (highly important). The survey was open from 15th January to 30th February 2019. A total of 128 responses from restaurant managers and graduates in Vietnam were collected in this period. Among the 33 employers, 24 are male, and 9 are female, with ages ranging from the early 20s to late 50s. They have undertaken the role of restaurant owners, restaurant managers, human resources managers, or recruiters of hospitality. Graduates participating in this study consists of 74 males and 21 females, with age ranging between 22 and 31. Forty-three of them have worked less than one year, 34 have worked from one to two years, and 18 have worked from two to three years.

Data from the survey were analyzed descriptively using SPSS version 20 to explore the importance of skills that hospitality graduates need to perform their work duties effectively. The mean scores (M) were interpreted using the following framework:

$1.0 \leq M < 1.8$: Highly unimportant
$1.8 \leq M < 2.6$: Unimportant
$2.6 \leq M < 3.4$: Moderately important
$3.4 \leq M < 4.2$: Important
$4.2 \leq M \leq 5.0$: Highly important

A Mann–Whitney *U* test was run to compare the rating of the skill set between the employer and graduate groups. This helped determine whether their perspectives on the importance of the skill sets were similar or different.

Qualitative Findings

Technical Knowledge and Skills

In participants' views, technical knowledge includes understanding about the local and international food and beverage culture, recipes and how to cook them, and operation of equipment or devices for their tasks. Alongside such bodies of knowledge were corresponding skills around setting up tables, designing the menu, preparing food and drinks, serving wine, and effectively using equipment and devices for their tasks. Their viewpoints can be illustrated as below:

> Firstly, students who want to work in restaurants must have the skills and knowledge of food preparation and processing. If we work in a restaurant, we need to know the skills of operation of Asian and Western dishes and other equipment and tools for preparation like folding napkins along with table manners. Working in this field, we have to know about food culture and cultural etiquette to avoid taboos. […]. The next thing is that we must know how to design menus because our tasks are to introduce the customers to various appetizers, main dishes, desserts, and other dishes to serve them best. (Employer 01)

> Technical skills are all skills related to work processes and the way to serve customers. The way to serve customers with food and wine is considered the most basic and necessary skills of professional competence graduates have to possess to work in hospitality. (Graduate 04)

Employers and graduates further suggested that graduates need to be able to handle hygiene equipment such as dishwashers, cleaning devices, etc. to ensure food and drink safety. They also believed that it was a plus if graduates possessed some marketing and sale skills because not all customers are familiar with the diversity of food, drinks, or related services available. Sometimes they need to recommend and convince customers to try new food, drinks, or hospitality services that the employing organization newly introduces.

> Sales skills, such as introducing new dishes, are necessary skills [for hospitality graduates] from our management perspectives. (Employer 04)

> There are always new customers, so it is important that graduates need to be able to actively market new products and services. (Graduate 01)

Soft Skills

Employers suggested that they paid much attention to the soft skills of applicants during the job interviews. To them, communication skills, problem-solving skills, foreign language skills, computer skills, and teamwork skills are key soft skills they were looking for as they believed that these skills would help their employees work effectively in their role. Likewise, in the interviews, graduates appeared to agree on the importance of soft skills in enabling their work performance. The skills mentioned most frequently in the interviews include communication, problem-solving, foreign language, and computer skills. Echoing employers' perspectives, graduates felt that these skills helped improve their work effectiveness.

> The first is listening skills. The second is taking care of customers. The third is the skill of handling situations. The most important thing is communication skills. (Employer 06)

> Moreover, the solving problem skill is also necessary because the hospitality industry has many unpredicted situations which we cannot anticipate, so we should possess problem-solving skills to tackle possible problems in our job. (Graduate 04)

In addition, both employers and graduates found that attitudes played a significant role in their job in the industry, especially for those working directly with customers. As hospitality is a service industry in nature, satisfying their customers' needs, sometimes excessively demanding, is the top priority. Having positive attitudes, remaining calm, being flexible, and being patient were reported as qualities that hospitality graduates need to possess.

> In my opinion, I should maintain positive and friendly attitudes to customers. If customers have many complaints, I should not be annoyed, but I must listen to customers and try to solve those problems […]. I need to calm down to solve the problem, take care, and listen to customers. These behaviors could make our customers feel more satisfied. (Graduate 09)

It is interesting to find that participants viewed computer skills as soft skills rather than technical skills. They explained that together with foreign language skills, computer skills are needed in almost every job in the tourism and hospitality industries because of an increase in the number of international travellers and young customers who are technology-driven. The hospitality industry has also equipped itself with many technologies that need computer skills to operate (Employer 11).

Leadership Skills

An advantage of being university graduates in a developing country is that they may be recruited for or soon promoted to a leadership position. Therefore, leadership emerged in our study as a skill set that hospitality graduates should possess. This is also natural in terms of career development because not all employees would like to remain to do the same role throughout their working life. It was noted that both employers and graduates defined leadership in association with management. This makes sense because people in leadership roles also undertake management tasks. However, we would like to separate leadership from management skills to better highlight their roles.

Employers mostly viewed leadership from a broad perspective. They associated leadership with planning and management of tasks and directing team members to achieve the set goals. They also emphasized the importance of encouraging subordinates to use interpersonal skills and bear responsibilities for the team. Graduates tended to view leadership from a narrower point of view, compared with that of employers. In the interview, they commonly discussed qualities that make good leaders in the industry. This is understandable as not many of them had been in a leadership role. In their opinion, assertiveness, confidence, abilities to communicate, negotiate, build and maintain good relationships with subordinates, and networking skills, among others, are vital for being leaders. Their views can be illustrated as follows:

> About leadership skills, two factors must be ensured. The first one is planning skills, and the second is taking responsibilities. Regarding planning skills, when you are a leader, you have to make plans and strategies to satisfy the business and investors' requirements. Also, you directly manage your employees and subordinates, so if they do something inaccurately or not good, you will be the one who has to take responsibilities. (Employer 03)

> In terms of leadership skills, first as a manager, I think that I should be assertive. Secondly, I should be good at external relations. Because I am a leader, I must be responsible for all my decisions. […]. I have to think quickly and make a definitive and clear decision. Another thing is relation-building skills because working in a restaurant involves cooperation and connection with other departments. (Graduate 10)

Management Skills

Working does not mean just focusing on a specific task that we are doing, but it also includes how to manage its progress in relation to other tasks of ours and others'. In our study, the participants suggested different skills related to management that hospitality graduates should possess. These skills cover three aspects of management: finance, people, and product-service. The first one includes knowledge and skills to deal with the cost of a product or service and finance-related issues, especially in planning a project. The second embraces the management of team members' work/collaboration and customers' expectations. The third covers a large spectrum, including management of quality of products/services offered, potential risks related to the products/services, and food and drinks safety. Their viewpoints can be shown in the illustrative quotes below:

> Management skills refer to the ability to master everything, every part of the restaurant, and manage all restaurant business activities. For example, we must have the financial knowledge to understand the costs and revenues to pay taxes, understand the market and current customers, and recognize potential customers. We often call the strategic customer market, the potential market, and the niche market. Besides, there must be skills and knowledge about human resource management, financial management knowledge and skills, marketing management knowledge and skills, relationship management skills in general. (Employer 02)

> Professional management skills include teamwork management and calculation skills, and properties management, human resources management, keeping records management. The most important thing in management towards restaurant there is that they have to control cargo. Moreover, management tools and ingredients are the most important skills in the restaurant because they usually make mistakes; therefore, we should be good at controlling them [for safety reasons]. (Graduate 08)

Career Planning and Career Development Skills

Employability is not static but evolving instead. Hospitality students need to develop their employability and plan for their career since they are with the university. Upon graduation and securing employment, they need to perform their work, further develop skills to meet the demands at work, and further plan to thrive in their career. Therefore, career planning and career development skills become an essential set of skills that hospitality students should possess. In this study, most employers suggested that they looked for career planning and career development skills in job applicants to make the hiring decision. An employer explained the importance of career planning and development skills as below:

> When students are career prepared and orientated carefully, I would say that they will be more employable than those who are not prepared at all. (Employer 10)

Graduates also echoed employers' perspectives, noting that career planning and career development skills are vital for their growth in the workplace. One of them asserted that this set of skills could "affect about 80% of their success in the job-hunting process" (P12, graduate). Another further explained how this set of skills oriented his actions to develop his employability capital and contributed to his success in securing a job in a well-known hotel-restaurant.

> I think that a well-prepared plan would impact graduate employability. In fact, I determined that I would work in the hospitality sector, so I tried to practice soft skills, foreign languages, computer skills. Moreover, attending internships and doing part-time jobs in high-end restaurants effectively accumulate [my] experiences, knowledge, and skills before graduation. Consequently, I could apply for jobs in luxury restaurants and hotels. (Graduate 06)

Participants suggested several skills that can be included in this skill category. For example, students should be able to plan long-term career goals and break them down into smaller goals to achieve through stages of their careers. Students should explore, identify and obtain future opportunities. They should be able to build up their employability resources by identifying their strengths and improving their weaknesses, improving their expertise, and participating in any professional development opportunities. They should also be able to purposefully demonstrate their capabilities to employers to get recognition or even promotions in their career.

Quantitative Findings

In our survey, there were 59 skills classified into five major skill sets: (1) technical knowledge and skills, (2) soft skills, (3) leadership skills, (4) management skills, and (5) career planning and career development skills. Both groups of participants rated the 59 skills either at an 'importance' or 'highly important' level. Employers rated 22 out of the 59 skills at a 'highly important' level, whereas that of graduates was 31 (see Table 7.1).

Communication skills, networking skills, confidence, foreign language skills, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, ability to build relationships, conflict-solving skills, ability to demonstrate personal capability to employers, and teamwork skills were the graduates' top 10 highest-rated skills (in descending order). For employers, the top 10 highest-rated skills and attributes in descending order were communication skills, teamwork skills, foreign language skills, problem-solving skills, time management skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, internship experience (as part of professional development), confidence, and conflict-solving skills. As such, on the top 10, both groups gained a consensus on 7/10 skills or attributes.

Employers also rated two out of the five skill set at a 'highly important' level while graduates rated three. The mean scores showed that employers rated the importance of soft skills the highest (M = 4.43, SD = 0.60), followed by career planning and career development skills (M = 4.24, SD = 0.67), technical skills (M = 4.15, SD = 0.75), leadership skills (M = 3.94, SD = 0.82), and management skills (M = 3.83, SD = 0.93). The ranking of the skill set by graduates was soft skills (M = 4.43, SD = 0.70), career planning and career development skills (M = 4.27, SD = 0.74), leadership skills (M = 4.25, SD = 0.75), technical skills (M = 4.07, SD = 0.87), and management skills (M = 4.04, SD = 0.82).

A Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to compare the importance level of the five major skill sets between employers and graduates. The results (Table 7.2) showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean rank of ratings of four out of five skill sets between the two groups of participants. The test results, however, suggested that their rating of leadership skill set was significantly different, $U = 1121.50, Z = -2.43, p = 0.02$.

Table 7.1 The importance essential skills or hospitality students

Skill sets	Employers		Graduates	
	(*N* = 33)		(*N* = 95)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Technical knowledge and skills	***4.15***	***0.75***	***4.07***	***0.87***
1. Knowledge of Vietnam food culture	4.42	0.75	4.20	0.87
2. Knowledge of international food cultures	4.15	0.71	4.05	0.88
3. Knowledge of food and drink preparation	4.15	0.76	3.98	0.86
4. Knowledge of dessert preparation	4.27	0.67	4.14	0.86
5. Food and service delivery skills	4.33	0.65	4.00	0.89
6. Table manner and cultural etiquette	4.18	0.81	4.04	0.93
7. Menu design and assessment	4.09	0.77	4.03	0.84
8. Product innovation (food, drinks, service)	4.12	0.74	4.06	0.89
9. Food preparation skill (decoration and preparation)	3.97	0.81	4.01	0.90
10. Operation of food preparation equipment and tools	4.06	0.75	3.97	0.87
11. Operation of beverage preparation equipment and tools	3.97	0.73	3.99	0.82
12. Ability to appropriately use hygiene equipment	3.94	0.83	4.03	0.91
13. Marketing skill	4.12	0.74	4.20	0.82
14. Sales skill	4.27	0.80	4.26	0.85
Soft skills	***4.43***	***0.60***	***4.43***	***0.70***
15. Communication skills	4.76	0.44	4.67	0.61
16. Interpersonal skills	4.55	0.56	4.51	0.68
17. Teamwork skills	4.67	0.60	4.42	0.68
18. Problem-solving skills	4.61	0.61	4.55	0.67
19. Conflict-solving skills	4.42	0.61	4.45	0.70
20. Analytical and reflective skills	3.88	0.70	4.21	0.71
21. Time management skills	4.55	0.61	4.40	0.76
22. Foreign language skills	4.61	0.50	4.56	0.75
23. Computer skills	4.18	0.64	4.35	0.71
24. Flexibility	4.36	0.60	4.39	0.72
25. Adaptability to new environments	4.52	0.67	4.38	0.69
26. Creativity	4.03	0.68	4.31	0.72
Leadership skills	***3.94***	***0.82***	***4.25***	***0.75***
27. Achievement orientation	3.76	0.94	4.13	0.75
28. Confidence	4.45	0.62	4.57	0.63
29. Assertiveness	3.91	1.10	4.29	0.73
30. Gathering and utilizing information	3.73	0.80	4.01	0.79
31. Analytical thinking	3.73	0.98	4.06	0.77

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Skill sets	Employers		Graduates	
	(*N* = 33)		(*N* = 95)	
	M	SD	M	SD
32. Conceptual thinking	3.67	0.82	4.02	0.74
33. Building a strong team	3.94	0.79	4.15	0.76
34. Building relationships	4.18	0.68	4.47	0.73
35. Networking	4.27	0.76	4.58	0.71
36. Negotiating	4.18	0.85	4.40	0.74
37. Persuading and influencing	3.73	0.88	4.14	0.75
38. Perceiving interpersonal behavior	3.76	0.71	4.21	0.78
39. Encouraging subordinates	3.94	0.75	4.16	0.87
Management skills	***3.83***	***0.93***	***4.04***	***0.82***
40. Cost and financial management	3.61	0.90	3.88	0.74
41. Product positioning and marketing	3.82	0.95	3.89	0.77
42. Human resource management	3.79	0.86	4.09	0.80
43. Administrative management	3.70	0.81	3.84	0.82
44. Customer relation management	4.03	0.92	4.20	0.87
45. Quality control	4.09	0.95	4.23	0.79
46. Food ingredient management	4.09	0.95	4.08	0.83
47. Risk management	3.39	1.09	3.95	0.89
48. Plan management	3.45	1.12	3.87	0.82
49. Food safety	4.30	0.73	4.37	0.83
Planning and professional development skill	***4.24***	***0.67***	***4.27***	***0.74***
51. Planning long-term career goals	4.12	0.65	4.15	0.76
52. Setting specific strategies to achieve the career goals	4.03	0.64	4.08	0.78
53. Exploring essential requirements of target jobs	4.27	0.67	4.28	0.72
54. Identifying and obtaining coming job opportunities	4.15	0.62	4.26	0.79
55. Recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses	4.33	0.69	4.40	0.69
56. Improving professional knowledge and skills	4.21	0.65	4.25	0.76
57. Attending training courses outside the university (where possible)	4.33	0.69	4.25	0.73
58. Interning at the restaurants (where possible)	4.45	0.71	4.35	0.73
59. Demonstrating personal capabilities with employers	4.27	0.67	4.43	0.68

Note The five-skill sets were based on participants' perspectives. We have not run principal component analysis to extract the 59 skills into components

Table 7.2 Differences in employers' and graduates' ratings of the importance of hospitality essential skills

Skills categories	Groups	*N*	Mean rank	Mann–Whitney *U*	*Z*	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Technical knowledge and skills	Graduates	95	64.05	1525.00	−0.23	0.82
	Employers	33	65.79			
Soft skills	Graduates	95	66.06	1419.00	−0.81	0.42
	Employers	33	60.00			
Management skills	Graduates	95	67.15	1315.50	−1.38	0.17
	Employers	33	56.86			
Leadership skills	Graduates	95	69.19	1121.50	−2.43	0.02
	Employers	33	50.98			
Career planning and career development skills	Graduates	95	66.41	1386.50	−0.99	0.32
	Employers	33	59.02			

Discussion

The study reported in this chapter explored employers' and graduates' perceptions about employability skills that hospitality students in Vietnam should possess to undertake their work duties effectively. We found five main skill sets that participants believed to be essential for hospitality students/graduates, including technical knowledge and skills, soft skills, management skills, leadership skills, and career planning and career development skills. In this section, we will explain the participants' rating of the skills set (being part of the employability capital) in light of Bourdieu's concepts of social field and habitus.

A social field is a structured system of social positions in which individuals occupy (Bourdieu, 1998). Habitus is viewed as a set of schemes generated as the results of functioning in a social field long enough and it can influence on how individuals think and act (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Habitus can be collective or individual. The former can be formed by "the homogeneity in the conditions of existence by a group of agents" whereas individual habitus is "a variant of the group or class habitus in that it expresses the difference between positions and trajectories of individuals within and outside the group" (Dumenden & English, 2013, p. 1080). Social field and habitus have a close connection and mutually influence each other (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this study, the social field can be referred to the various social contexts in which Vietnamese hospitality graduates and employers function; the habitus is their thinking or perspectives of what skills needed for hospitality industry, being part of the employability capital. Our study suggested some convergence and divergence in the two groups of participants' perspectives toward the importance of skill sets for hospitality jobs.

Both employers and graduates agreed on the importance of many skills set because they have been exposed to similar contextual factors in the industry. First, both group rated the importance of soft skills as 'highly important', and most skills and attributes in the top 10 highest-rated belonged to the soft skill set. This result is consistent with other studies conducted in Vietnam and elsewhere (Do & Nguyen, 2016; Nguyen, 2016; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Ruetzler et al., 2014; Sisson & Adams, 2013; Spowart, 2011). Their perspective was aligned with the nature of the hospitality industry, where customers' satisfaction is the utmost priority; therefore, soft skills would enhance graduates to achieve that priority. It was also noted that foreign language skills, viewed as soft skills in Vietnam, were rated as 'highly important' by both groups. This very well reflects the current development of the tourism and hospitality industry in Vietnam. The past decade has witnessed the growth of international tourists coming to the country using different products and services offered in the industry. Likewise, integration in the tourism industry between ASEAN countries brings Vietnamese hospitality students numerous work opportunities with international customers, both in Vietnam and ASEAN (Do & Nguyen, 2016; Nguyen, 2016). Thus, hospitality employees must be able to have a good command of foreign languages to effectively communicate, serve, and satisfy this group of customers. Computer skills are also considered soft skills in the context of Vietnam, rated 'highly important' and 'important' by graduates and employers, respectively (see Table 7.1). This also reflects the fact that the hospitality industry in Vietnam is modernizing its services and operation, as mentioned in the interviews.

Secondly, the technical skillset was rated at an 'important' level and ranked at the bottom half of the five skill sets found in this study by both employer and graduate groups. This result may be shocking to many hospitality programs as in Vietnam, tertiary education institutions in general and hospitality programs in particular often focus on developing technical knowledge for students (Tran, 2018a) instead of practical industry experience or hands-on skills (Khuong et al., 2017; Le et al., 2018). Even so, the training is often deemed as inadequately prepare students' work-readiness as employers have to retrain all new recruits (ManpowerGroup, 2014; Tran, 2018b). This can also be another reason why both groups ranked technical knowledge and skills lower than other skill sets. Employers appear to lose trust in hospitality graduates' quality; thus, provision of retraining of technical knowledge and skills to match with the practice in their organization can be a safe solution for hospitality service. As such, this set of knowledge and skills becomes a condition for 'recruitablity' (i.e., can be accepted for a job position) instead of 'employability' (i.e., enter a job with confidence and thrive with it). This result requires hospitality programs to re-examine the focus of their program delivery.

Third, results also showed that work management skills are essential for hospitality students; however, this skill set was rated the lowest by both groups of participants among the five skill sets found. This can be linked to the fact that in Vietnamese culture, management positions are often linked to seniority (Le & Truong, 2005). Possibly for this reason, both employers and graduates did not rate management skills as significant as other skills for new graduates. Nevertheless, hospitality programs should include these skills as hospitality jobs not only require graduates to work directly with customers but also plan and manage services to ensure that everything happens smoothly to satisfy customers. This complex nature of work in the industry, therefore, demands graduates to possess management skills to undertake their work duties effectively.

Fourth, career planning and career development skills were surprisingly rated the second-highest by both groups. This skill set best reflects the concept of employability: not just develop skills to obtain a job, but continue to upgrade expertise to thrive and sustain their ability to secure jobs in the industry, even in different positions (for example, see Hillage & Pollard, 1998). This finding is also aligned with Bridgstock's (2009) perspective that career planning should be part of the employability skills framework. From employers' and graduates' perspectives, hospitality jobs may be unstable and short-term; therefore, graduates need career planning and professional development skills to remain employable. On a more positive side, in the Vietnamese tourism and hospitality industry's current context, there are multiple job opportunities in the industry, but graduates must be able to plan and develop their expertise to obtain and function well in new roles.

Our study also showed divergence in employers' and graduates' perspectives about the importance of leadership skills. The Mann–Whitney U test results suggest a significant difference in employers' and graduates' perspectives about the importance of leadership skills, in which graduates rated the importance of these skills higher than employers. While it was difficult to explain this difference from the data, it can be partially explained by socio-cultural expectations hold by Vietnamese graduates. In Vietnam, tertiary education is a significant investment for many students and their families. It not only a means to have better family prospects but also brings individual and family pride. Those in management and positions are often admired by others because it is an indicator of talent, power, and income, which can be 14.9 times higher than a junior staff in 2016 (Writer, 2017). Thus, it is natural for graduates to rate leadership skills to be 'highly important' as they could want to be in a leadership role soon. Employers rated these skills significantly lower than graduates did, but it did not necessarily mean that they looked down on these skills as their rating fell within the 'important' level.

Our discussions above have highlighted the influence of contextual factors on participants' views about what skill sets are important for working in the hospitality industry. Such contextual factors, e.g. the service nature of the industry, the internationalization process in Vietnam, the tradition of hospitality training in the higher education system, the conventional purpose of pursuing higher education, are important aspects of a social field in which graduates and employers operate their business activities and develop their career. Following Bourdieu's perspectives (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), the two groups of participants are functioning in the same social field, but they occupy two different social positions: one as newcomers and wanting to go higher in the career ladders and the others being established professionals and on management position. Therefore, the social field affected their thinking and beliefs, or habitus in Bourdieu's terms about the importance of investigated skill sets differently, resulting in the disparities in their rating of the skill sets. Regardless of such disparities, this study suggests that at different stages of one's career, their perspectives on the importance of some employability capital differ because their habitus alters as their social position changes.

It is noted that this study has just explored employers' and graduates' perspectives on the skills needed for those working in the hospitality industry in Vietnam. Future studies may further explore perspectives of students, academics, and university leaders/managers to generate a comprehensive understanding of the skill sets needed for hospitality employees, which may reveal the gap in the perspectives of the supply and demand sides. That will offer rooms for hospitality curriculum improvement, which will narrow the skills gap currently existing in the labor market. Likewise, quantitative studies need to run factor analysis to classify skills into specific skill sets more methodologically. This will help improve the robustness of findings about skill sets, with their constituent skills, necessary for hospitality students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In short, this study found that in employers' and graduates' perspectives, hospitality graduates need to possess technical knowledge and skills, soft skills, management skills, leadership skills, and career planning and development skills. The current context of the hospitality industry and socio-cultural aspects of Vietnam—acting as a social field—appeared to affect employers' and graduates' perspectives of skills, and the importance of these skills, that graduates need to possess (i.e., their habitus). In order to improve the quality of training of hospitality students in Vietnam, the universities need to reconsider the training programs to meet the expectations of the demand side. Based on the findings of the current study, it is recommended that institutions offering hospitality degrees should revise their curriculum and embed the skill sets identified so that qualified graduates can be produced. In terms of training, on top of delivering technical knowledge and skills, institutions should raise students' awareness of the importance of soft skills, which are highly sought after by employers. They should enhance work-integrated learning such as project-based, practicum, field trips, and internships, which significantly contribute to the development of non-technical skills for students. Institutions should also support their students to identify job positions that they wish to work in and set up a plan to develop their employability skills to meet these jobs' requirements. Extra-curricular activities that connect students with employers and graduates are also recommended because these activities can help students better understand the industry's expectations of them as well as train them in many soft skills. Finally, employers and experienced graduates should be involved in curriculum development and delivery of the curriculum. This can help the programs more practical and better aligned with industrial needs. All of these together will narrow the gap between what institutions teach and what employers want.

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Part III
Initiatives to Develop Graduate Employability

Chapter 8
Graduate Employability and Responsiveness: The Need for Aligning Policy Directions and Institutional Readiness in Ethiopia

Wondwosen Tamrat

Abstract This study was conducted to examine the level and nature of responsiveness that Ethiopian public and private higher education institutions exhibit toward graduate employability. The study was conducted using national data available on 13 public and private institutions. The findings reveal that, despite the encouraging trends of an expanding higher education sector, there are serious concerns about the ability of universities to respond to the demands of the labor market and employers. While the policy directions appear to recognize the impending challenges of graduate employability, many institutions have not yet developed the readiness to respond to such demands in an organized and efficient manner. In the absence of the needed structures, systems, and learning experiences within and outside universities, the institutional capacity to influence graduates' employability will remain restricted. This suggests the need for broadening the existing conceptualization of employability, encouraging greater university-employer interaction and adopting proactive schemes within and outside of institutions as the basis for improving institutional responsiveness toward graduate employability.

Introduction

Successful and appropriate graduate employability is a benefit and a responsibility for all stakeholders—graduates, employers, higher education institutions, governments, and the economy at large. Failure to equip graduates with the necessary skills, attributes, and competencies can have adverse consequences such as unemployment, low wages, job dissatisfaction, low productivity and less competitiveness of a given economy (Badillo-Amador & Vila, 2013; Mateos-Romero & Salinas-Jiménez, 2018; Tamrat, 2019b)—While it would be most appropriate for all stakeholders to join together to improve graduate employability, there appears to be inordinate demand on higher education institutions (HEIs) to produce the graduates with the profile that

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the industry needs. In fact, HEIs' failure to provide the right type of graduates appears to be a point widely shared across the huge body of literature available on the subject (El Mansour & Dean, 2016; Hodges & Burchell, 2003). The cause of such failures is often attributed to academia's limited role in designing employability strategies and policies and reluctance toward systematically and actively engaging in activities that can provide better inputs and outcomes (The Gallup Organization, 2010; McArthur et al. 2017).

Ethiopia is endowed with a rich history of religious education that surpasses 1700 years. However, the Ethiopian higher education sector is a relatively young system with 70 years of experience under its belt. The first modern higher education institution in the country, the University College of Addis Ababa (today Addis Ababa University), was established with a handful of students and staff in 1950. Until the 1960s, the government played a significant role in absorbing the limited number of graduates that came out of the various educational establishments across the country. Serious challenges to graduate employment began to surface only in the late sixties, driven by a variety of socio-economic and demographic changes. This included, among others, the rise in the number of primary and secondary graduates, the decline in GDP, and the nature of the private investment, which demanded little skilled human capital, thereby contributing to a high rate of unemployment among high school graduates (Asayehegn, 1979).

New changes in the job market and the unprecedented expansion of the education sector over the last two decades have further exacerbated the challenges of graduate employment. Currently, there are 50 public higher education institutions and over 300 accredited private higher education institutions that enroll more than a million students at the tertiary level (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2018). Both public and private higher education institutions produce over 160,000 graduates per year. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions similarly churn out around 100,000 graduates annually. The unemployment rate for post-secondary graduates in general is reported as 14% (World Bank, 2016) but the figure could be higher given the rising incidence of unemployment across many sectors. For instance, a study conducted by the former Ministry of Youth and Sports indicated that 480,000 university and technical, vocational education and training graduates in Ethiopia were still looking for jobs in 2017. Employers also report difficulty in finding workers with the required preparation expressing their dissatisfaction about the ability, skills, and competence of graduates. According to Beyene & Tekeleselassie (2018), employers are most often dissatisfied with graduates' practical skills, appropriate work ethic, and readiness to learn. They often attribute graduates' lack of technical skills and non-technical skills to the poor preparation at higher education institutions.

On top of other factors, addressing graduate employability requires institutional responsiveness to the new demands of the job market. However, little is researched about how much and in what ways institutions are responding to the demands of graduate employability. This chapter seeks to address this gap through a close examination of national policy directions and the level of responsiveness Ethiopian HEIs exhibit toward the demands of graduate employability. The chapter begins with a literature review to develop an institutional responsiveness framework and discusses the various mechanisms of institutional responsiveness and theorizations about employability which will serve as the spine for the study. Following the method section, institutional responsiveness at different dimensions of the higher education system will be reported with a link to various theorizations about employability (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Holmes, 2013).

Theorization of Employability and Institutional Responsiveness

According to Holmes (2013), there are three distinct ways in which graduate employability can be conceptualized and theorized. The first is what is termed as the possessive approach. This approach is dominant across many systems and assumes that employability can be defined in terms of certain characteristics and attributes. In this approach, graduate skills and attributes are treated as though they are meant to be possessed and later used in the job market and the task of HEIs is to ensure that the question of mastery of defined skills and attributes by graduates is addressed (Holmes, 2013; Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015). However, the approach is argued to provide no explanation for a variety of differences in employment outcomes between graduates from particular demographic, cultural or economic groups.

The second approach views higher education as a system structured to reinforce existing social positions and argues that social phenomena such as employability get meaning and are shaped by a web of relationships in a given context (Delva et al., 2021). This is best explained through Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus and capitals whose interplay is considered to have a critical impact on employability (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). According to Bourdieu (1998), a social field can be understood as the contexts in which an individual or institution functions; habitus denotes individual or institutional actions taken based on the social field; and capital refers to the resources that individuals or institutions possess or have access to. Clark and Zukas (2013) note that Bourdieu's thinking tools—habitus, field and capital—may contribute to a better understanding of individuals and their employability than the perspectives held by the possessive approach. In particular, Bourdeau's sociological studies of inequalities helps to move beyond a focus on disembodied knowledge and skills whilst providing a framework for considering issues of class and gender as well as issues of personality and motivation (Clark & Zukas, 2013; Ingram & Allen, 2019).

The process perspective on graduate employability refers to the mechanisms in which individuals transition from university to the workforce and assumes that "individuals are not mere pawns in a game, just 'victims' of a system stacked in favour of the few and against the many but creatures whose futures are affected by the decisions and actions they take" (Holmes, 2013, pp. 548–549). According to this approach, after building on skills and attributes acquired in gaining a degree, individuals begin to develop a graduate identity which they present to 'gatekeepers'/recruiters and managers (Holmes, 2013). A critical element in this process is the emphasis given to career self-management and associated behaviours such as career exploration, guidance seeking and networking (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015).

The above discussion suggests that subscribing to the notion of graduate employability that is solely linked to one specific approach such as basic skill acquisition demanded by employer groups may not be always the right thing to do (Clarke, 2017). It can be anticipated that the specific forms of institutional responsiveness can be influenced by the aforementioned and other conceptualizations which can have broader implications for policy and- or institutional operation.

Institutional Responsiveness

According to Wedekind (2012), responsiveness refers to "the degree to which an educational institution responds to external factors in determining its offerings." The concept entails the factor or set of factors the institution responds to and the nature of the response or responses given. The link between responsiveness and employability is foregrounded in the critical role institutions are expected to play in addressing labor market needs and preparing employable graduates. When it comes to employability, the new role of higher education and its relationship with the economy, the labor market, and society in general are often articulated as manifestations of responsiveness (Kruss, 2004). At the earliest stages, this assumption was resisted as inappropriate on the grounds that the purpose of HEIs should focus more on addressing the broader goals of producing well-rounded citizens (Mtawa et al., 2019) than settling for this myopic conceptualization.

With the increasing demand of the labor market and the advent of neo-liberal tendencies (Sin et al., 2017), HEIs have succumbed to the demands of aligning educational practices with the needs of the labor market and society. In fact, as noted by Boden and Nedeva (2010), the neo-liberal orientation in higher education has engendered a discursive shift from traditionally viewing graduate employment as an aspect of institutions' relationship with the labor market, and one where they enjoyed a significant degree of discretion, to a performative function of universities, shaped and directed by the state, which is seeking to supplant labor markets. As a result, new employability models that assume a direct link between higher education and the labor market are emerging both in institutional expectations and in changing practices (Kruss, 2004; Tran, 2016).

Aside from being spurred on by neo-liberal tendencies and the support of supranational agencies and networks such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, there appears to be a moral obligation on the part of HEIs which should support this pursuit. In the current context, where leaving individuals 'without' employability would considerably diminish their life chances (McCowan, 2015), universities are required to equip graduates with job-specific skills that are specified, monitored, and incentivized (Boden & Nedeva, 2010). However, it should be noted that, despite its increasing acceptance, there are arguments portending that the employability "agenda" should not be promoted to the extent that it undermines the core function of universities: the production of well-rounded citizens. Hence, it is suggested that universities' instrumental value should exist alongside their intrinsic value, rather than being replaced for otherwise the purpose of higher education and the distinction between higher and vocational education will be eroded altogether (Kinash et al., 2016; McCowan, 2015). Kruss (2004) captures the challenges of universities in adjusting to their new roles in the following way:

> Universities are experiencing the tension between promoting the model of indirect employability of the past and developing a new model of direct employability to their general programs. Their professional programs continue to operate in terms of the past model. Institutions have put in place, to differing degrees, new strategies, and mechanisms that promote a model of direct employability congruent with that of the other constituencies, but large swathes of their educational activity continue to be driven by the traditional model of indirect employability (pp. 94–95).

Institutions respond to the labor market demands through a variety of mechanisms, tasks, and activities that are considered to be key in enhancing graduate employability. These responsibilities comprise various roles that pertain to identifying employability skills, enhancing the mobility of graduates and university faculty, and facilitating the transitional phase for new graduates. Concrete expressions of the commitment and initiatives taken by HEIs include the development of employability programs and strategies, the introduction of relevant components within university courses and curricula, institutional systems, close engagement with employers, integration of careers and employability services into single student support arrangements, setting up of career departments or offices, studies focusing on the identification of employability attributes, and other careers and employability-related activities (Helyer & Lee, 2014; Lowden et al., 2011; McCowan, 2015; Shivoro et al., 2018).

Wedekind (2012) conceptualizes responsiveness and employability as the dynamic interaction of a set of variables and outlines four broad thematic areas through which responsiveness to employability can be realized: linkages between educational institutions and external sectors such as local employers; the curriculum delivered in the colleges; transitions to work, tracking students and examining destinations; and policy and implementation. Institutional awareness of the challenges of employability and responsiveness towards these activities is crucial for aligning their efforts with the labor market needs. We explore below these common manifestations of responsiveness toward graduate employability.

Linkage and Partnership

University-Industry (U-I) linkage primarily aims to enhance students' work-readiness and can occur in different forms such as work placements, internships, guest speakers, recruitment drives, or practical projects of various types (Tran, 2016). As noted by Tran (2016), it is a useful way "to increase university responsiveness for the economy, to bring authentic lessons from the market into the university curriculum, to enhance skills desired by contemporary employers, and thus, to enhance employability for students and graduates" (p. 66). Links forged between industries and universities allow the preparation and provision of tailor-made courses, continuous professional development (CPD), and running jointly developed undergraduate/postgraduate programs. For instance, Yorke and Knight (2006) suggest that the full spectrum of pathways to embedding employability in the curriculum features a number of overlapping approaches that include using work-based curriculum components, adopting employability-related modules, and work-based learning in parallel with the curriculum. Higher education institutions are most often expected to define and deliver skills and attributes that respond to today's fast-changing work environment and incorporate them into their programs, but the participation of employers in this task is often regarded as critical. According to Minocha and others (2017), employers' recognition of university-employer collaborative initiatives also serves the purpose of bridging the gap between institutional curriculum and employers' expectations. Despite an increasing number of curricular and pedagogic developments undertaken to address graduate employability, the extent to which these have been embedded across the sector is unknown (Lowden et al., 2011). So is the impact of these developments on both employers and academia.

Relationship with employers is also critical in terms of enhancing employability. As noted by Fahnert (2005), internships are crucial for learners to experience the actual work environment, in addition to developing subject, transferable, and career skills through the curriculum. The practice demands institutions' active involvement in assigning student interns to appropriate workplaces, supporting them, and closely monitoring their performance. It requires employers to grant permission for student placements, and more importantly, to get involved in monitoring student progress and providing constructive feedback. Employer readiness to assume active responsibility in U-I linkage not only helps graduates to develop new skills but also to develop confidence that would help them respond to the various demands of their jobs. Staff from universities or industries could also interact, exchange information, or share experiences to identify the skills needed in the workplace. Martin (2000) argues that institutions are increasingly involved with the provision of continuous development for professionals in the industry and have a definite comparative advantage in this domain over all other providers. This can be seen as a platform for knowledge transfer since it raises the skill levels of the workforce in business and helps universities gain access to the latest developments in professional practice. In contexts where the level of employer participation remains passive, the whole process of internship and externship can be endangered. With the increasing consideration of universities as potentially attractive partners for business, U-I linkage is being realized in the form of contracted or collaborative research, consultancy services, technology transfer, and commercialization of intellectual property (D'Este et al., 2005; Perkmann & Walsh, 2007) which will not be treated in this paper.

Curriculum Responsiveness

Central to both student employability and the responsiveness of institutions is the curriculum. Within the responsiveness literature, curriculum responsiveness appears to be mostly discussed as the critical route for accommodating the demands of employability (Sin et al., 2017; Wedekind & Mutereko, 2016). According to Wedekind and Mutereko (2016), the curriculum is the medium through which knowledge is selected, translated, and transferred since it represents both the official intentions of an educational institution and the lived experience of teaching and learning of the participants within the institution. A study of the curriculum in all its dimensions thus provides a productive lens for making sense of the various forces at play in the processes of developing student employability through responsiveness. According to Moll (2005), a responsive curriculum must take account of a range of factors: economic responsiveness (employers, the market); cultural responsiveness (ethnic, cultural, religious, and learning-styles diversity); disciplinary responsiveness (the disciplinary community that generates new knowledge through research) and student responsiveness (the needs of the student). In a similar vein, Wedekind and Mutereko (2016) argue,

> At a broader level, curricula need to respond to policy requirements (regulative and symbolic) such as labor laws, affirmative action, or health and safety regulations that employers may not always identify. Similarly, social, cultural, and environmental issues require responses in the curriculum that enhance capabilities and competence in the expanded sense but may not be identified by employers. Finally, the institution itself needs to respond to a range of internal dimensions such as its human and physical resources, managerial capacity, and location in developing its curriculum. (p. 4)

Based on Moll's (2005) suggestions, Wedekind and Mutereko (2016) further contend that the five contextual dimensions that create drivers of responsiveness are: (1) Employers (as drivers of both demand and supply with regard to labor and education and training), (2) Students/workers/job-seekers, (3) Policies and regulations, (4) Societal and environmental issues, and (5) Education & Training organizations.

Transition to Work, Graduate Tracking and Student Destinations

Understanding the transition process from college to work can be considered as an important element of responsiveness toward graduate employability. Improvement in graduates' employability cannot be judged only by what happens at universities but also by what goes after graduation if a comprehensive process of the training and employability patterns need to be understood. In fact, the increasing focus on employability as a measure of study program effectiveness requires that higher education institutions collaborate with past graduates and employers in study program reviews (Kinash et al., 2016; Nudzor & Ansah, 2020). Graduate tracking, which involves collecting information on graduates' career development can help understand, monitor and improve HEIs' performance and alignment with labour market needs (Wedekind, 2012). It often provides information regarding typical career trajectories of graduates as well as higher education program relevance and development (Senekal & Munro, 2019). Tracking graduate information can also help to examine the quality of jobs, the length of the job search period, graduates' job satisfaction, and the match between competencies and job requirements, in addition to analyzing the impact of graduate characteristics and program design on labor market outcomes (Wedekind, 2012). In doing so, the practice of tracking university graduates offers a unique opportunity to contextualize employment outcomes and develop an in-depth understanding of the nature of employment, underemployment, and unemployment (Cuadra et al., 2019) with a view to improving future performance.

Another related source of knowledge that could enhance graduate employability but rarely tapped in many contexts is the use of alumni associations. Apart from being important sources of resources, alumni have a useful role to play in mobilizing graduates to contribute to their professional success through mentoring, structured, paid placements, support during application and interview processes, and facilitating access to professional networks (Bridge Group, 2016).

Policy and Implementation Framework

The type of institutional responses adopted toward graduate employability can be influenced by the policy and implementation framework set. Policy frameworks of graduate employability can be designed at regional, national, sectoral (e.g., education), or institutional level. For instance, the European Commission policy emphasizes the role of higher education in equipping graduates with the knowledge and core competencies they need, as well as the importance of embedding practical experience in learning programs and engaging employers and labor market institutions in the design and delivery of study programs (Wedekind, 2012). Policy directions could also encourage public authorities to put in place and use information and planning at the system level in order to improve graduate employment outcomes using practical tools such as skills demand and labor market forecasts, graduate tracking and surveys, guidance and counseling initiatives (Wedekind, 2012) (Fig. 8.1).

Arguably, the foregoing discussion shows the considerations any scheme of responsiveness should make if success on this front is to be achieved. Based on the conceptual framework given above, the following section offers an overview of the research design, which will be followed by major findings and conclusion of the study.

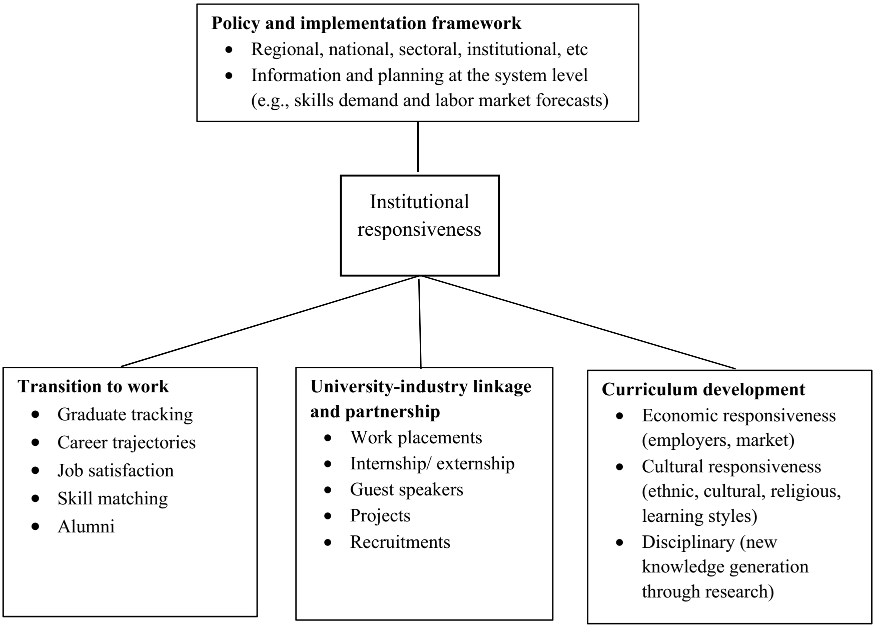
Policy and implementation framework
Regional, national, sectoral, institutional, etc
Information and planning at the system level (e.g., skills demand and labor market forecasts)
Institutional responsiveness
Transition to work
Graduate tracking
Career trajectories
Job satisfaction
Skill matching
Alumni
University-industry linkage and partnership
Work placements
Internship/ externship
Guest speakers
Projects
Recruitments
Curriculum development
Economic responsiveness (employers, market)
Cultural responsiveness (ethnic, cultural, religious, learning styles)
Disciplinary (new knowledge generation through research)

Fig. 8.1 Institutional responsiveness framework (Developed from the literature)

Research Design

The study follows a qualitative approach and uses document analysis as its primary means of data collection. Thirteen quality audit reports produced by the Ethiopian national Higher Education Relevance and Quality Authority (HERQA, 2016) were purposely selected as the sample of the study. These data were made available in the public domain by HERQA. The data comprise information about seven public and six private institutions audited by the Agency in the year 2017. While the public institutions are all universities, the private ones have the status of college as designated by the Agency.

The specific sections of the quality audit reports related to *program relevance and curriculum*, *student progression and graduate outcomes*, and *outreach activities* were carefully extracted from the quality audit reports of the 13 institutions selected. All relevant data were identified and compiled for each university before any analysis was made. In addition to extracting all available information for each institution, an interpretation of the meaning of the extracts has been made through a deductive process of reflecting on how the data relate to the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2012).

The national data corpus has been analyzed following the major stages of collecting the data, exploring and coding it, using codes to form a description of the central phenomena, grouping the codes to form broader themes, and finally interpreting and analyzing the data (Creswell, 2012). The nature of responsiveness exhibited at the institutional level has been grouped by adopting Wedekind's (2012) model, which considers linkages and partnerships; curriculum; transition, destinations and tracer studies; and policy directions as major manifestations of graduate employability and responsiveness.

Findings and Discussion

A checklist was developed to chart the level of responsiveness exhibited at each of the institutions, as shown in Table 8.1. Specific discussions are given after the table following the major themes identified for analysis. All institutions were purposely identified by numbers to keep their identity anonymous.

Table 8.1 Responsiveness checklist for sample institutions

HEI	Provision for curriculum development	Formal link with employers	Availability of career office	Data on graduate destination	Employer feedback	Tracer study	Alumni
College 1	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
College 2	√	×	×	×	×	×	×
College 3	√	×	×	NA	NA	NA	NA
College 4	?	?	×	×	×	?	×
College 5	√	×	×	×	?	×	×
College 6	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
University 1	√	√	×	×	×	×	×
University 2	√	×	×	×	×	×	×
University 3	√	√	×	×	×	?	×
University 4	√	?	NA	×	×	?	×
University 5	√	?	NA	×	×	×	×
University 6	√	?	NA	×	×	×	×
University 7	√	?	×	×	?	×	×

Key √ = system available; × = system not available; ? = system available but not satisfactory; NA = information not available

National Policy Directions and Expectations

The issue of graduate employability has lately drawn important policy and strategic considerations in Ethiopia both at national and institutional levels. To begin with, the country's constitution (FDRE, 1995) recognizes the role of the government in creating job opportunities: "The State shall pursue policies which aim to expand job opportunities for the unemployed and the poor and shall accordingly undertake programs and public work projects." The constitution further states that "The State shall undertake all measures necessary to increase opportunities for citizens to find gainful employment" (FDRE, 1995; p. 14). Ethiopia's national policy agendas and development policies similarly identify the improvement of employment opportunities and economic development as one of their major goals. One of the earliest development plans of the incumbent government, "The Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty" (PASDEP) 2005/2006–2009/2010, for instance, identifies job creation as one of the major pillars of the country's poverty reduction and economic development strategies (MoFED, 2006). Job creation through private sector development and focused programs on small and medium enterprises has been articulated as one of the pillar strategies of the PASDEP (MoLSA, 2009). In a similar vein, the country's most recent Growth and Transformation Plans I & II (MoFED, 2010, 2016) identify generating employment for the expanding labor force as the major development objectives of the Ethiopian government. According to these plans, expanding employment and reducing poverty is to be achieved through the development of the manufacturing industry, promotion of private investment, micro and small enterprise development, and natural resource conservation and development (MoFED, 2016, p. 113).

Another important mechanism devised along the same line has been the creation of a national Employment Policy (2009) prepared to facilitate the coordination of employment creation and labor administration across all sectors and sections of society. Ethiopia's employment policy identifies enhancing social welfare, accelerating economic growth, and achieving political stability as the three important objectives that drive improvement in employability (MoLSA, 2009). The specific actions suggested to be taken as regards the demand and supply side of employment generation include: accelerating private sector development for employment generation; ensuring effective and efficient public sector employment; improving and raising labor productivity and improving labor administration, and strengthening labor market institutions (MoLSA, 2009).

Apart from setting broad policy frameworks, the government has been involved in addressing the employment challenges of the country through the introduction of various initiatives. One of these mechanisms relates to encouraging more privatization as a means of driving growth and job creation. A major component of the government's approach in this regard has been attracting large-scale foreign direct investment (FDI) in export-oriented light manufacturing sectors through the rapid expansion of a series of industrial parks. Recently announced reforms, including the opening of key economic sectors in telecommunications, energy, aviation, and logistics for private foreign participation is regarded as a new phase in Ethiopia's economic transformation. Another national initiative is the establishment of the Investment and Job Creation Steering Committee led by the prime minister and primarily geared toward the creation of three million jobs annually and the improvement of the investment climate (Tamrat, 2019a).

The above is a clear manifestation of a new shift and commitment toward addressing the employability challenge and responsiveness as a policy goal. However, these positive policy directions do not necessarily indicate the form institutional responsiveness should take, how it should unfold, or what mechanisms can be put into place to promote it (Kruss, 2004). The sections below examine commonalities and variations at the level of policies and institutional actions.

Institutional Strategies and Directions

Within the education sector, both Ethiopia's 2019 Higher Education Proclamation and the country's Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) V (MoE, 2015), the Ethiopian Education Development RoadMap 2018–2030 (MoE, 2018) recognize the importance of graduates who have the requisite skills and technical knowledge. For instance, Ethiopia's Higher Education Proclamation (FDRE, 2019) stipulates that higher education institutions should prepare knowledgeable, skilled, and attitudinally mature graduates in sufficient numbers and of required quality within relevant fields and disciplines for the country to become internationally competitive. Similarly, the country's Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) V (2016) recognizes the importance of graduates with the appropriate skills and technical knowledge and assumes that academic institutions should equip graduates with relevant industry knowledge, up-to-date specialized skills and competencies, and work-ready attitudes that would help them succeed in the world of work. These directions set expectations for institutions to become more directly responsive to the labor market through a skill-oriented intervention mechanism.

Furthermore, since 2018, the Ethiopian government, through its Ministry of Education, has embarked upon a new plan to improve the employment of university graduates with a specific target of creating degree-relevant employment for 80% or above of graduates within one year (Tamrat, 2018). The new plan identifies the core issues that influence low graduate employability as questionable teacher quality, poor quality graduates, and weak linkages with industry on the basis of which the scheme aims at improving institutional responsiveness. The contents of the curricula, assessment schemes, and students' poor language and communication skills have also been identified as key areas of improvement. It can be assumed that this new direction provides a significant backdrop for considering the ways in which a higher education policy centered on responsiveness is beginning to shape expectations and practices in the Ethiopian higher education sector.

The above directions appear to suggest that the policy directions set in the Ethiopian context mostly concentrate on the development of skills and attributes of graduates. The tradition appears to be in keeping with the possessional approach toward employability (Holmes, 2013) with little attention paid to other wider perspectives and views that influence graduate employability. This myopic understanding of the process of employability not only affects the responses given by institutions and the system at large but also encourages intervention mechanisms on a limited area of operation and scale. Notwithstanding this limitation, the success of such policies is often determined by how intentions are realized at the level of institutions. Following Wedekind's model (2012), we examine below how the various components of responsiveness are realized in the institutional setup of public and private institutions in Ethiopia.

Linkages and Partnerships

The data collected indicate that linkage and communication between institutions and employers are in most cases limited, short-lived, informal, and highly unstructured. This must have been a hindrance to enhancing job opportunities for prospective graduates. The following excerpts indicate the situation:

> There are not many systematically organized and established links between the university and potential employers to facilitate graduate employment. The University does not have strong links with external stakeholders that may employ its graduates and has not made efforts to increase the employment prospects for students. (University A)

> The EQA (External Quality Audit) team noted that apart from informal links aimed at student apprenticeship/internship programs, no formal link exists between the College and potential employers of its graduates. (College A)

> Employer respondents remarked the absence of linkage, lack of knowledge about the types and levels of programs undertaken. They added that there should be different exposures for students to visit field related organizations. (University F)

Linkages are often initiated for limited functional needs, such as student internships. This has created a condition whereby efforts toward creating job opportunities for graduates and getting feedback useful for institutional improvement are constrained.

> The University has no formal contacts with employers to collect feedback on its graduates and to take appropriate action based on obtained feedback. (University C)

The lack of a structured system and formal link with industries appears to be two of the most common deficiencies institutions are exhibiting. Most of the institutions investigated do not have formal mechanisms for coordinating graduates' internship and linkage with potential employers. If at all there are any efforts geared towards this end, it does not often take place through offices dedicated for the purpose.

> The College does not have a career advisory service and support systems to graduating students looking for employment. (College B)

Apart from creating unnecessary knowledge gap on both sides and undermining potential benefits, the unstructured and haphazard responsive mechanisms used by Ethiopian HEIs are arguably impacting the success of graduates in mastering the needed skills and augmenting their employability opportunities.

Curriculum Responsiveness

While the literature on responsiveness identifies curriculum as one of the key areas, the data collected suggest serious gaps as regards the practice of Ethiopian institutions. In most of the institutions, the lack of guidelines, absence of responsible units, and lack of regular review of curricula were found to be common.

> There was no adequate evidence of the existence of systems or written procedures for program initiation, approval, monitoring, and review that was explicitly put in place. No records and written reports or guidelines are found to show the existence of a well-organized, consistent and sustainable system is in place to coordinate and manage curriculum issues. (University C)

This apparent lack of efficient practice in curriculum development and renewal is an indication of limited institutional readiness and capacity to address the challenges of the time. Another major deficiency observed is the lack of institutional practice in defining skills, competencies, and attributes that graduates need to master. This task forms a critical component of responsiveness to graduate employability (Tamrat, 2019b).

> The College's curricula fail to map the stated graduate profiles (attributes) into graduate-level competencies in terms of subject knowledge and skills, transferable skills, and attitudes that the learner would acquire. (College A)

An equally worrying trend is the limited participation of stakeholders in the curriculum development process:

> None of the College's documents has set a clear demand requiring the participation of stakeholders in the curriculum development and review process. (College F)

One of the challenges given as an excuse for lack of dynamism within the public sector is the fact that institutions are expected to use nationally accredited harmonized curricula, which gives them little room to make changes and improvements, even if they wish to:

> The [curriculum] committee currently works only on course delivery activity; that is, they just mainly work on identifying and arranging which course is to be delivered by which professionals. The committee also said they have become nominal because since the University is using the nationally harmonized curriculum, they do not know to what extent they are entitled to modify it. (University F)

It can be seen that the activities undertaken by most of the universities lack the needed comprehensiveness, rigor, and external consideration, which is an indication of the poor responsiveness exhibited by institutions. Apart from affecting institutional autonomy, such system-level impediments have their own impact in terms of responding to the changing needs of the labor market and the outside community. Coupled with little institutional readiness, such failures can thus be a serious hindrance to achieving the objectives set at national, sectoral, and institutional levels.

Employer Feedback

The practice in most of the institutions is suggestive of deficiencies in collecting appropriate feedback from relevant stakeholders.

> So as to ensure program relevance … the involvement and feedback of external stakeholders (such as alumni, professionals, employers and international experts) are of great importance. This will help any HEI to collect constructive feedback from stakeholders during program development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. [However] when it comes to this University, stakeholders' involvement is minimum. (University C)

Even when efforts are made to involve stakeholders, including students and instructors, it is often cosmetic, piecemeal, and irregular:

> It was noted that internal stakeholders/teachers/ give feedback on the developed curriculum rather than engage in the whole process. Students, on the other hand, involve irregularly in commenting on courses and their consistent involvement is not ensured. Furthermore, the team observed that other stakeholders are not completely involved in curriculum review and evaluation process. (College B)

As noted earlier, this appears to be primarily an outcome of the limited efforts made in the creation of appropriate structures and systems that can respond to emerging needs**.**

Transition, Destinations, and Tracer Studies

As may be seen in Table 8.1, the practice of conducting tracer studies is a rare phenomenon across most of the institutions studied.

> The university does not have mechanisms in place to systematically collect and disseminate data on student progression, graduate destinations, and employer satisfaction. (University B)

The apparent lack of data management systems in many institutions appears to be affecting the design of useful strategies that help to address deficiencies. In a similar vein, many HEIs suffer from the apparent lack of data on the destination of their graduates and the level of satisfaction employers have towards graduates.

Some claim to collect such information on an informal basis, but the overall pattern is indicative of the lack of a formal and organized system to do this:

> The university does not have a strong system in place to systematically collect and disseminate data on graduate destinations and employer satisfaction so that it may be used to feedback into program improvement. (University E)

While alumni associations could serve as a good source of information, support and feedback, owing to their reach sources of experience, resources and networks, literally none of the institutions appear to have succeeded in setting up such associations and offices. These limitations must seriously affect the possible lessons institutions could draw from tracking their graduates.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter examined the nature of institutional responsiveness toward graduate employability through the lens of policy, linkage, curriculum, and graduate tracking and outcomes. The findings suggest serious concerns about the ability of Ethiopia's universities to produce the right type of graduates that can respond to the demands of the job market. While the needs for addressing graduate employability are widely acknowledged at the policy level, the institutional readiness to respond to the demands of the labor market appears to be at its infant stage yet. The majority of institutions exhibit some forms of responsiveness but, unfortunately, most fail to address initiatives such as facilitating graduates' transition to work, collecting and disseminating relevant data, and tracking the employment progress of graduates. This appears to be in line with other findings in the developing world where higher education curricula, resources, and services are not optimally suited to support employability and employment outcomes (Kinash et al., 2016). It is true that graduate employability is not solely dependent on what the institution does (Sin et al., 2017). However, given that HE institutions are being held more accountable in the context of the governmental employability agenda (Fahnert, 2005), what happens at the institutional level should be a core issue of concern.

In the absence of the needed structures, systems, and learning experiences within and outside the university, the institutional capacity to influence the employability of graduates will remain restricted or meaningless. This suggests the need for greater university-employer interaction and the adoption of proactive institutional approaches as the basis for improving responsiveness toward graduate employment outcomes. As noted earlier, the response to graduate employability in Ethiopian HEIs should assume a variety of interventions and mechanisms that would facilitate graduates' improved access to the job market. However, the efforts made so far appear to give more emphasis to the identification and development of essential skills and attributes only. The findings are particularly indicative of limited initiatives made to consider the impact of factors like social positioning and graduate identity that can affect graduate outcomes and the responses deployed towards this end (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Holmes, 2013). This suggests the need for an organized and broader form of responsiveness toward graduate employability. It is recommended that, together with addressing current deficiencies in the system, Ethiopian institutions should do more in incorporating the wider conceptualizations of employability in their responsiveness schemes. Such a broader and integrated view helps to identify areas of individual responsibility (for students and graduates) and areas for potential collaboration between universities, employers and industry groups (Clark, 2017). It also calls for more proactive behaviors on the supply side (i.e. students/ graduates and universities) and enabling/engaging behaviors on the demand/policy side (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015).

At the level of implementation, broadening existing policy perspectives, aligning policy directions and institutional readiness, and undertaking proper follow-up and incentivization for greater university-employer interaction may be key to improving institutional response to the graduate employability agenda. Conversely speaking, negligence in attending to these demands not only derails the national goals set about graduate employability but it can also have serious implication in terms of threatening the very existence of the institutions themselves for failing to respond to one of the timely agendas of the day.

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Chapter 9
Developing Generic Skills for Students in Vietnamese Universities: Facilitators and Inhibitors

Tran Le Huu Nghia

Abstract Generic skills can significantly contribute to graduates' employment outcomes and career success. However, there is a lack of research about how such skills are developed to enhance graduates employability. This chapter will report a study that investigated the strategies adopted by six Vietnamese universities to develop GS for students and their experience with the implementation. The study found that although the six universities shared a similar implementation concept, these universities put the concept into practice differently, in terms of implementation scale, the strategies to impart GS to students, and pedagogical practice. The analysis showed that in participants' experience, curriculum autonomy, university leadership, and availability of connection with external stakeholders were important for successful implementation.

Introduction

Generic skills (GS) are non-discipline specific skills that can be utilized across study, work, and life contexts (Tertiary Education Quality & Standards Agency, 2013). Examples of these skills are communication, problem-solving, and teamwork skills, among others. These skills can enhance graduates' employment outcomes and overall work performance, enable their lifelong learning abilities, prepare them for an unpredictable future and support them to act for the social good (Hager & Holland, 2006). Therefore, higher education (HE) institutions have launched many initiatives to develop GS for students, aiming to enhance graduates' employability (Barrie et al., 2009; Clark et al., 2015; Jackson, 2015).

However, it is observed that HE systems and institutions are developing GS for students using different approaches, curriculum types, and pedagogical practices.

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Such differences appear to derive from differences in the context of a country, the visions and missions of an institution, stakeholders' perception toward GS, and availability of resources (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009). Such findings reflect Bourdieu's perspectives that in certain context and with access to certain resources, institutions—being a team of people—will think and act in a way that make them function in alignment with that context, what Bourdieu coined 'social field,' 'capital,' and 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The literature also suggests that most studies about GS implementation come from Western English-speaking countries. There has been a lack of studies on GS-related issues in developing countries; thus, further investigation should be conducted in these countries to expand our understanding in this regard.

Vietnam can provide an interesting case to investigate GS implementation outside of the Western HE contexts. Located in Southeast Asian, Vietnam is a developing non-English speaking country. It's HE system is generally structured following a Confucian HE model (Marginson, 2011), with embedment of socialist ideologies and some Western educational heritages (Harman et al., 2010; Pham & Fry, 2002). Since 1986 when the Renovation Policy was passed, the country has witnessed a stable economic growth rate for decades (World Bank, 2008, 2015) and requires a stable supply of a skilled workforce. As globalization and internationalization scales up, Vietnam is experiencing free labor flows in and out of the country. Without developing a skilled workforce, it is challenging for Vietnam to sustain its local labor market and its competitiveness internationally. Unfortunately, research consistently indicates that Vietnam lacks a qualified workforce for its socio-economic development (Bodewig et al., 2014; Manpower Group, 2011; World Bank, 2008). To help address the shortage of a skilled workforce, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has led comprehensive reforms since the early 2000s (Harman et al., 2010), aiming to increase the quality and quantity of university graduates. In 2010, the MOET issued the Guideline 2196/BGDĐT-GDĐH (MOET, 2010), mandating Vietnamese universities to develop GS for students. However, functioning within the social field framed by the HE system and the social-cultural and political context of the country, how Vietnamese universities think and act to implement it is a big question, concerning a lack of capital/resources such as curriculum and institutional autonomy, qualified teachers, and material resources, etc (Harman et al., 2010).

In this chapter, we will report the models that Vietnamese universities developed to train students in GS. This chapter will also discuss influential factors behind the development of these models and influencers of the effectiveness of implementing these models. This chapter extends our knowledge about the diversity of models that universities worldwide are using to develop GS for students.

GS Implementation Models and Influencers

Generally, GS implementation includes four elements: the conceptualization of the implementation, implementation scale, curriculum design, and pedagogical practices to impart GS to students. The existing literature reveals several influencers associated with each implementation task, which creates the diversity of GS implementation models.

Conceptualization of the Implementation

Any GS implementation would begin with a central concept, which can shape the 'content' of GS implementation. Based on the concept adopted, HE institutions would select and impart the selected GS to students in line with the concept (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009; Pitman & Broomhall, 2009). At the institutional level, a concept may be adopted with a careful consideration of the national context, institutional situation, and characteristics of disciplines (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009). At the personal level, perspectives about how to develop GS for students may vary between different groups of HE stakeholders (Barrie et al., 2009). Therefore, the group whose GS perspective is adopted by the university, for the implementation, will significantly shape its content. As such, if there is shared perspectives between HE stakeholder groups, it will benefit the harmony of the implementation. Unfortunately, there is 'little space for dialogue and discussion' between those groups considering the current context of HE (Barrie et al., 2009). In most cases, employers' perspectives, academics, professional bodies, and regulatory bodies are often considered. As a result, GS implementation is predominantly conceptualized as developing skills to enhance students' learning and employability.

Implementation Scale

Universities may choose to execute GS policy at different scales. Fleming et al. (2013) reported a university-wide GS implementation. Often led by a top-down leadership approach, it can enhance the harmony of the implementation across disciplines and schools in the university. However, top-down leadership approach often result in disengagement, compliant behaviors, or even resistance from the academics because they find that their perspective is not considered enough and that the implementation is imposed by the higher-ups. In contrast, some universities choose to execute GS policy on a program-wide scale (O'Neill, 2009), restricting it within the boundary of a program. Thus, it results in several independent implementations of GS campus-wide. This approach can be coordinated either using a bottom-up or top-down approach. The former may face similar issues like the university-wide implementation. The latter begins with starts with academic initiatives for teaching and assessing GS in the classroom. This leadership approach may improve academics' engagement, but it may not yield high impact of the implementation if there is lack of institutional policies and incentives (Barrie et al., 2009).

Channels to Impart GS

HE institutions have designed different types of curriculum to impart GS to students (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009; Jääskelä et al., 2016). Generally, universities design GS curricula aligned with their perspectives about the relationship between GS and discipline-specific skills (i.e., technical skills or specialized skills).

Embedded or integrated GS curriculum: If GS are perceived to closely related to specialized skills, implementers will select relevant GS, integrate these skills across subjects of a curriculum and have disciplinary teachers deliver the skills to students within the context of a discipline (see Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009). This curriculum design can help students link GS with discipline-specific skills. However, the implementation of this GS curriculum model is not very visible and may cause people to disengage gradually. Also, it is complicated to map GS across subjects of the curriculum, and delivering GS together with specialized skills would result in increased workloads, provoking resistance from the teaching staff (Barrie et al., 2009).

Stand-alone GS curriculum: In contrast, if GS are perceived to have little or no connection with specialized skills, implementers will develop independent GS development subjects or modules. Then skills experts are invited to intensively impart GS to all students in the institution. This type of curriculum is often classified as co-curricular, extra-curricular activities, or foundational studies (Barrie et al., 2009). However, sometimes, extra-curricular activities occur without any concrete curriculum. The aims of these curriculum designs are to ease students' transitions into the university, to prepare them for later studies of specialized subjects, or equip students with practical to find jobs (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009). It is argued that while it is simple to design and deliver such curricula, students may fail to connect these GS with discipline-specific skills (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007). Also, intensive delivery mode is not effective in terms of developing GS as skills needs much time to develop (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Gonczi, 2006).

Pedagogical Methods to Impart GS

The student-centered learning approach is found to benefit students in developing their GS. Under this approach, GS can be taught effectively using work-integrated learning (WIL) (Jackson, 2013; Smith & Worsfold, 2015), project-based learning (Jollands et al., 2012; Moalosi et al., 2012), community service learning (O'Connor et al., 2011), and online or distance learning (Brodie, 2011; Lewis, 2011). The literature also suggests that teacher engagement is a major obstacle for GS implementation. This could be related to their perception about the importance of teaching GS in their subjects, their GS-related expertise, the availability of institutional support (such as policy and incentives), the participation of students, and practicality issues related to teaching (Barrie et al., 2009; de la Harpe & David, 2012; Jones, 2009). Therefore, for

GS implementation to progress well, it is important to train teachers in GS expertise and pedagogical practices, and enhance institutional capacity for carrying out activities related to the implementation. Other factors that may affect the effectiveness of GS-imparting pedagogical methods include but are not limited to students' disregard of developing GS, large class size causing difficulty in helping individual students develop the GS they lack, heavy workload reducing teachers' commitment with teaching GS, among others. Generally, the effectiveness of teaching GS appeared to depend very much on the contextual factors of the institutions and the engagement of stakeholders involved in the process.

Research Methods

The study reported in this chapter aimed to identify facilitators and inhibitors of the implementation of GS in Vietnamese universities. A qualitative multiple case study approach was chosen as it is useful for investigating the implementation deeply and within its real context; it also allows for comparison of the implementation of GS among the cases, highlighting convergence and divergence in the way GS policy was implemented (Yin, 2009). Using a maximum variation sampling principle (Merriam, 2009), the researcher purposefully chose three public and three private universities, each of them could represent institutional types and institutional contexts existing within the Vietnamese HE system (Table 9.1).

The study narrowed down to investigate GS implementation within the Business Administration program of the six mentioned universities, with an intention to preserve disciplinary distinctiveness of the implementation (Jones, 2009). It was also because the Business Administration program was a popular program, and GS implementation in Schools of Economics appeared to advance compared with other schools in Vietnamese universities. Therefore, investigating the implementation in this program would provide rich data for the study and the findings can be more applicable.

The researcher used a snowball sampling technique to recruit participants in each selected university (Browne, 2005). This technique afforded the researcher to identify and approach key GS implementers based on another participant's references. In total, 69 participants were recruited (Table 9.1), including university leaders, school leaders, disciplinary teachers (who taught Business subjects), skills teachers (who taught GS development subjects), leaders, and staff members of the Youth Union and its associates (YUA).[1]

Data for this study included 69 semi-structured interviews (Horton et al., 2004) with the participants. The researcher also collected relevant documents and policies

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[1] The Youth Union is a socio-political organization for the youth of the Communist Party. It is installed in all schools and universities to provide political education and lead social engagement activities for the youth.

Table 9.1 A summary of participants and institutional context

Universities	Institutional context	Participants
University A (public)	Located in a regional city, University A is governed by the MOET and the provincial authority in terms of academic affairs, finance, and administration. Its institutional context is typical for most public regional universities in the country	4 leaders, 7 teachers, 1 YUA leader, and 1 YUA staff member
University B (public)	University B is located in a metropolitan city in Vietnam. It is considered one of key universities in Vietnam, with qualified academic staff, and extensive connections with industries. However, it does not have curriculum autonomy, which makes it a special case in this study	4 leaders, 8 teachers, and 1 YUA leader
University C (public)	Located in an average-sized city, University C is considered one of the eight most important university in a geographical region. It is directly governed by the MOET in terms of academic affairs, funding, and administration. University C is well known for its recent innovations in pedagogy and management practices	3 leaders, 9 teachers, and 1 YUA leader
University D (private)	University D was upgraded from a semi-public vocational college. It was granted with institutional autonomy in curriculum and finance management. Because of such privileges and the vocational education tradition, this university became a special case in the HE system	4 leaders, 5 teachers, and 1 YUA staff member
University E (private)	University E is a private university located in a regional city. This university reports to the MOET and does not have curriculum autonomy. This university represents newly-established private universities in Vietnam	3 leaders, 6 teachers, and 1 YUA staff member
University F (private)	University F is one of the first 17 private universities in Vietnam. The university is supervised by the MOET primarily in terms of academic affairs. It represents the longest-established private universities in Vietnam	3 leaders, 6 teachers, and 1 YUA staff member

that were either available on the university websites or provided by the participants (Prior, 2003), such as institutional policies related to GS, curriculum, meeting minutes, curriculum mapping results, GS-teaching and assessment samples. The data was analyzed using a qualitative content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Treating case by case, the researcher transcribed the interviews and repeatedly reviewed for content. Passages relevant to GS implementation models, influencers of its adoption, and factors influencing the implementation of these models were highlighted and coded. Then, the researcher compared the codes across the cases to identify similarities and differences in the implementation of GS between the universities. This step also involves evidence-based interpretation of factors influencing the implementation. Finally, the results were put together in the final report.

GS Implementation Strategies of the Six Universities

Conceptualization Despite slight differences in the list of GS selected to develop for students, all six Vietnamese universities shared one of the following two goals of GS implementation: (i) enhancing students' engagement with their university studies and (ii) improving their graduates' employment outcomes. The former is complementary to the latter as students' learning outcomes are associated with different employability skills that employers look for, such as technical and soft skills, qualifications and even GPA. Therefore, the central concept of GS implementation in Vietnamese universities was developing work-readiness for students/graduates.

Implementation scale The analysis showed that top-level leaders of Universities C, D, and E directly coordinated a university-wide implementation. In contrast, in Universities A, B, and F, the top-level university leaders empowered mid-level university leaders to execute the implementation in their respective schools, i.e., they adopted a school-wide implementation.

GS-imparting channels The analysis of interviews revealed that GS were imparted to students via two channels. First, via curriculum-based activities, skills subjects were designed to help students develop a number of GS deemed important for learning at the university and for the workplace, such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, and teamwork skills. Facing the difficulty caused by a lack of curriculum autonomy, most universities could only add a couple of skills subjects and encouraged disciplinary teachers to impart GS within specialized subjects. Second, to escape the mentioned difficulty, all six universities have the YUA organize extra-curricular activities as another channel to develop GS for students. The findings revealed that at the time of research, four universities (A, B, C, and F) used extra-curricular activities as the primary channel to develop GS for students. The other two universities (D and E) attempted to impart GS to students within the curriculum of the Business Administration program, and extra-curricular activities were used an additional channel.

GS-imparting pedagogical methods Participants from Universities A, B, C, and F reported that they were using a student-centered approach to deliver specialized and GS development subjects, and a compulsory internship to help students develop GS. Participants from Universities D and E noticed that they adopted a WIL approach in executing GS policy, both for learning activities in the classroom and via the internship.

As such, the six Vietnamese universities developed GS for students with the main aim of improving work-readiness for their students/graduates. The concept was implemented university or school-wide via curriculum-based and extra-curricular activities and using student-centered pedagogies, including the WIL. However, it appeared that contextual factors and institutional autonomy affected the way leaders translated that concept into practice. Based on the differences and similarities of the four elements of the implementation, three GS implementation models were identified (Table 9.2).

Influencers of GS Policy Implementation

Influencers of Developing GS via the Main Curriculum and/or Co-curriculum

All interviewed teachers believed that it is important to teach GS to students. However, only teachers of University D methodologically translated their beliefs into real teaching behaviors and attributed their success in teaching GS to the institutional leadership. Contrarily, teachers from the other five universities suggested that leadership did not provide adequate support for them to translate their beliefs into actual teaching in the classroom. Below is an illustrative comment of a teacher from University F regarding their institutional leadership:

> The implementation of generic skills in this school is really weak. Why? It is because of the school leaders' perception of generic skills. They need to be more flexible and go to industries to see what aspect of the curriculum needs improving. […]. I hope that the leaders will launch initiatives that motivate and engage teachers with training skills for students. (Participant F6)

The analysis revealed that leadership influenced on teachers' GS-teaching behaviors in four aspects. Firstly, consistent with finding in the case of developing GS in Australian universities (Barrie et al., 2009), this study found that except for University D, GS policies in the other five universities was not clearly communicated the responsibilities of teachers. Disciplinary teachers reported that that university leaders assigned teaching GS to the skills teachers and the YUA, and that they could teach GS at their discretion. However, in the interview with these universities' university leaders, it turned out that they expected disciplinary teachers to teach GS as much as they could. This miscommunication of GS policy resulted in disciplinary teachers not teaching GS at the subject level. Likewise, it appeared to be linked to students'

Table 9.2 Generic skill implementation models in Vietnamese universities

Model	Description
School-wide, extra-curriculum-based model University A University B University F	• *Concept*: equipping students with work-readiness • *Scale*: school-wide • *Channels*: extra-curricular activities, complemented by curriculum-based activities • *Pedagogical methods*: – GS were imparted in a compulsory internship and via student-centered pedagogies in the classroom; – Skills subjects were taught separately from the curriculum of the Business Administration program; – Teaching and assessment of GS were *not* explicitly in specialized subjects
University-wide, extra-curriculum- based model University C	• *Concept*: equipping students with work-readiness • *Scale*: university-wide • *Channels*: extra-curricular activities, complemented by curriculum-based activities • *Pedagogical methods*: – GS were imparted in a compulsory internship and via student-centered pedagogies in the classroom; – Skills subjects were taught separately from the curriculum of the Business Administration program; – Teaching and assessment of GS were *not* explicitly in specialized subjects
University-wide, curriculum-based model University D	• *Concept*: equipping students with work-readiness • *Scale*: university-wide • *Channels*: curriculum-based activities, complemented by extra-curricular activities • *Pedagogical methods*: – WIL were adopted to teach GS in the classroom and at the workplace – Skills subjects were taught within the disciplinary context for the first two years of the program; – Teaching and assessment of GS were explicitly in specialized subjects

engagement with developing GS for their future careers. While several teachers explained student disengagement in terms of unawareness of the relevance of GS to their learning and future career, others ascribed it to unclear communication with students regarding GS policies and expected learning outcomes. It was common to hear such a comments from teachers in the interviews with them:

> Some students only want to complete the program and graduate. They don't care about generic skills, no matter how we emphasize the importance of these skills. (Participant C3)

Secondly, the teaching of GS did not progress due to a lack of incentives and management tools. In the experiences of many skills and disciplinary teachers, GS was hard to teach and such teaching activities were '*time and effort consuming.*' Thus, they believed that they deserved a higher pay rate compared with other teachers; otherwise, they would be unwilling to teach GS. Unfortunately, they did not found any incentives related to teaching GS.

> The salary for teachers is low and does not match our workload. So why should I enhance the quality of my work? If I work harder [in teaching skills to students], the salary will be the same. (Participant A4)

Excluding the teachers from University D, the others suggested a lack of effective management tools to ensure that teachers engaged with teaching and assessing GS. In their perspectives, class observations and student course experience questionnaires were used as tools for this purpose, and these two tools could generally motivate them to teach more effectively rather than driving them to engage with teaching GS. Consequently, many disciplinary teachers chose to ignore teaching of GS, even though it was within their expertise.

> There were no drivers for GS teaching, so teachers just do whatever they want. Gradually, they would not commit to developing GS for students. Why would they make themselves tired with more work? (Participant F6)

Thirdly, many teachers chose not to teach GS due to inadequate training for the task. At the time of research, the interviewed skills teachers attributed their ability to teach GS thanks to their own experience, attendance at a previous skills class, or self-studies. Likewise, some disciplinary teachers reported that they could teach GS based on their industrial work experiences or their motivation to enhance students' workability. Except for the disciplinary teachers from University D, no disciplinary teachers from the other five universities associated their teaching of GS with any forms of teacher training activities provided by their respective institutions. They believed that staff training was necessary because 'imparting GS to students would need specific ways to successfully do so' (Participant C6). This was aligned with Jones' (2009) and de la Harpe and David's (2012) notice that even when teachers have some GS expertise, additional training to improve their confidence and engagement with imparting these skills is necessary.

Fourthly, the analysis revealed that several institutional factors, most of which have been identified in other research (Harman et al., 2010; Jones, 2009; Tran et al., 2018), caused difficulties for teachers to teach and assess GS. As mentioned by many participants in the interviews, large class sizes of '*over 50 students in the class*' seemed to discourage teachers from using student-centered pedagogies to develop GS for students. In addition, except for English teachers, all other skills teachers gained a consensus on the fact that the amount of time allocated for skills subjects was inadequate for skills to be trained properly as unlike transmitting knowledge, skills need to be practiced regularly. Similarly, all disciplinary teachers, who taught GS, experienced that the time allocated was too short to deliver specialized knowledge, technical skills, and GS. Consequently, most disciplinary teachers prioritized specialized knowledge; they only '*told,*' '*discussed briefly,*' or '*showed video clips*' to encourage students to develop important GS on their own. Moreover, inadequate teaching–learning resources also limited their teaching of GS. Except for the English teachers, the other skills teachers reported that they had to collect GS learning materials by themselves and their compendium was insufficient for the purpose of imparting GS successfully. Several teachers mentioned that they referred students to online learning resources; however, in their opinions, these resources were of little use due to students' dependent learning behaviors and their low level of English proficiency. Furthermore, heavy workloads were found to obstruct GS teaching. It was common to found teachers expressed their disheartening feeling in the interview. They explained that for a successful implementation of GS at the classroom level, they need to adopt many new teaching and assessment practices. This resulted in an increased workload such as lesson preparation, in-class and after-class learning activities for students, and provision of feedback on students' submissions for assignments.

In short, the findings suggest that leadership strongly affected the translation of teacher beliefs into GS-teaching behaviors. Even when teachers had personal motivation and GS expertise, in many instances they would not put their beliefs into practice without the direction of leadership to remove institutional obstacles and encourage teachers' engagement. Findings in this section reflect very well results in Barrie et al. (2009) about a lack of leadership in implementing GS policy in Australian universities. In a highly centered higher education culture like in Vietnam, without appropriate leadership to make stakeholders understand the rationales behind the implementation, change their perception about the importance of GS, buy in the implementation strategies, and prepare them to impart and assess GS confidently, teachers will not engage with the implementation.

Influencers of Developing GS at the Workplace via Internship Programs

Internships are part of the main curriculum of the Business Administration programs of the six universities, just like the way many universities in the world are doing in enhancing their students' employability (Jackson, 2013; Smith & Worsfold, 2015). However, the researcher reports independently to better highlight the effectiveness and its influencers. Like their counterparts worldwide, Vietnamese universities also used internships, a type of work-integrated learning, to develop GS for students. Participants generally viewed that internships positively helped develop GS for students. Students were expected to take one or two internships as a compulsory part of their degree. During the internships, students were trained with specialized/technical skills, applying their disciplinary knowledge into the authentic context of the organization where they took the internships. At the same time, exposing to real-life contexts, they were expected to polish the acquired GS and continue to develop skills they recognized to be relevant and vital for their future career.

However, the effectiveness of internship programs in developing GS for students appeared to depend on many factors. First, from the participants' perspectives, it relied on the existing network with people in industries for internship opportunities and their commitment to supervising the interns. Previous studies found a weak collaboration in research between Vietnamese universities and industrial corporations (Bilsland et al., 2014; Fatseas, 2010; Tran, 2006, 2009). This study further found the impact of such a weak collaboration on GS-teaching activities. Established universities, such as Universities B, C, and D, appeared to have better advantages than the recently-established ones. Likewise, HCMC-based Universities B, D, and F appeared to receive more support from industries in terms of internship opportunities as HCMC is the largest business and industrial hub in the country. In contrast, the regional universities struggled to find internship opportunities for their students. Within the scenario of lacking internship opportunities, it was also reported that industry-based stakeholders did not commit to supervising students to learn from their work experience. In many cases, it seemed that they considered their role as to complete forms that interns or internship program coordinators provided, as illustratively reported below:

> Employers want the graduates to possess sound knowledge, be able to hit the ground running, but they do not support us very much in training students. For example, they do not want to accept interns, or they only gave interns data to write the thesis but not get them involved in their business activities. (Participant A2)

This could be detrimental to the effectiveness of using internships to develop GS for students because workplace supervisors are found to contribute the most to students' skills development (Jackson, 2015). Therefore, it is important for Vietnamese universities to connect with employers and engage workplace supervisors in the internship. Without their commitment to supervising interns methodologically, the use of internship will yield little effects.

Second, participants also reported that student engagement with the internship was vital for developing GS at the workplace. School- and department-level leaders of all universities involved in this study suggested that due to a lack of connection with industries, they had a policy that allowed students to look for internships by themselves and then report it to the respective coordinator who will approve it. This policy ensured that the internship was relevant to students' preferences and reduced the pressure for looking for internship opportunities from the institution's part. However, in many disciplinary teachers' and department-level leaders' experience, many students looked for internship opportunities in their relatives' business or somewhere that was willing to give them an internship report, but the actual interning conduct was questioned. Similarly, many of those who interned in an organization as assigned by the internship coordinator did not recognize and value the internship opportunity as a venue where they can develop their professional expertise, including GS, forge professional networks, and possibly secure an employment position. They only took it naively as a compulsory part of the program, completing all tasks and assignments required to pass the internship program, without much effort invested for their future career development. Such attitudes and engagement behavior negatively affected the development of GS as well as other professional attributes. Student engagement throughout the internship is a 'critical element of placement design' (Jackson, 2015, p. 362), which can help them via practice and observation. Therefore, it is vital to equip students with meta-cognition of what, why, and how they should undertake an internship wholeheartedly and meaningfully to make good use of this valuable learning experience.

Third, it depended on the collaboration between the university side and industry side in supervising the intern. In many interviews, disciplinary teachers who were in the role of an academic supervisor for interns confessed that due to heavy teaching workload (see Tran et al., 2018), they somehow neglected the interns, leaving them in the workplace supervisor's hand throughout the internship, except for reminding the interns of completing assignments, often in forms of a project report or an undergraduate thesis. Not many of them visited the intern at the workplace to see how students adapted or progressed in the internship. They rarely contacted the workplace supervisor to discuss how to supervise the interns collaboratively. Also, in many teachers' opinions, workplace supervisors focused on their business and often gave '*general,*' '*only nice words,*' or '*unreliable feedback*' at the end of the internship. This reflects Tran (2015) observation about the cooperation between employers and Vietnamese universities in developing employability skills for students. As such, on top of connecting, collaborating with industrial stakeholders is also vital for developing GS via the internship.

Influencers of Developing GS via Extra-Curricular Activities

Consistent with many studies conducted in other countries (Clark et al., 2015; Lau et al., 2014), in this study, the majority of participants provided positive feedback on the role of the YUA in developing GS for students via extra-curricular activities. They believed that participating in extra-curricular activities was necessary for students, not only for their learning, but also for their future careers.

> Students who participated much in the YUA's activities are more active and better in communication, which helps them greatly when they graduate. In contrast, students who only focus on the study are less successful [at work] although they would be able to find a job. (Participant F9)

Unlike in many Western universities, Vietnamese universities used YUA's extra-curricular activities as an integral part of the institutional strategy for training students in GS. Their contribution to the implementation was acknowledged by all participants in this study. For example, one top-level leader of University C stated that a study about GS implementation in Vietnamese universities would not be complete if it did not analyze the YUA's roles in the implementation. The interviews revealed that the YUA developed GS for students via five major activities:

- Training students in political qualities to help them live and work in a socialist society. This has been the primary responsibility of the YUA.
- Collaborating with skills experts to provide skill classes that train students in communication skills, job interview skills, CV writing, presentation skills, and career planning skills. Those classes were delivered by skills experts and were either free or paid by students.
- Providing career consultation for students to define and prepare for a suitable career path.
- Linking students with employers via career fairs.
- Organizing social engagement activities to make good use of students' knowledge, skills, and commitment for the development of surrounding suburbs or remote areas that need support.

In the interviews, most participants mentioned the YUA's roles in training students in '*soft skills,*' '*work skills*' or '*living skills*' more often than political qualities. This suggests that there was a shift in the focus of the YUA's extra-curricular activities in participants' observation: from political education to skills development. However, from YUA staff members' perspective, political training for students was till the central mission, but it was carried out differently. A YUA staff member illustrated that servicing attitude is an important attribute compatible with a socialist society; therefore, engaging students in such activities was actually developing the political attributes.

However, the extent to which the YUA could contribute to GS implementation varied between the universities, dependent on several factors. First, it was noted that university types influenced the activities through which the YUA developed the selected GS for students. Both public and non-public universities in this study trained students in political qualities. While the YUA of the former seemed to be more concerned about training students in social engagement skills, the YUA of the latter appeared to put more effort into training students in employment-related skills. Such disparities can be attributed to differences in the institutional visions and missions, just as in the case of GS development via the curriculum.

Second, the effectiveness of the YUA's activities depended on student participation, as noted in (Tran, 2017). Across the six universities, participants suggested that students joined in the YUA's activities enthusiastically due to their recognition of the benefits of improving their GS through the YUA's activities. Simultaneously, participants observed that many students only participated for 'self-improvement' scores, a reference used for determining students' academic ranking or scholarship opportunities.

> Students are very practical; I have to say. For example, when I encourage them to join a useful activity, they would ask if joining that activity would be counted into their score for extra-curricular activities.' (Participant F3)

Students' disregard for participating in extra-curricular activities may be found in other contexts. It is caused by various factors such as an academic achievement preference culture, clash between their study timetable and extra-curricular activities, and part-time employment others (Al-Ansari et al., 2016). While it is challenging to help them tackle all of these difficulties to participate in extra-curricular activities, it is always good to raise their awareness of the importance of these activities to their future career and encourage their participation. Only when they feel they need to participate will they overcome challenges and engage with developing GS via such activities.

Third, institutional perception of the YUA role in the university also affected the YUA's contribution to GS implementation. In University D, the YUA was considered the supporter of students, whereas in the other five universities, the YUA were regarded as students' leaders. As supporters, the contribution of the YUA of University D to GS development for students was dependent on students' proactivity. The YUA of University D gave students opportunities to develop many GS skills such as organization skills, teamwork, critical thinking, and communication skills. The YUA in the other universities played the leadership role in organizing extra-curricular activities to develop GS for students than the YUA in University D. However, it is difficult to know in which case the YUA developed GS for students via extra-curricular activities more effectively. It is beyond the scope of this study; thus, it needs further investigation in the future.

Fourth, the institution's reputation and existing network with external stakeholders also significantly influenced the YUA organization of extra-curricular activities. In all six cases, the YUA's extra-curricular activities relied on a small budget provided by the university, possibly common in other contexts (Sepahpanah et al., 2013); however, much of this small grant was allocated to training students in political qualities. To organize social engagement or job-orientation activities, the YUA had to look for external sources of funding. In this respect, the YUA of well-known Universities B and C, which had an extensive network with industries, local authorities, and alumni, seemed to have better advantages. In contrast, University E had difficulty organizing extra-curricular and social engagement activities because it was a newly-established university and lacked a network with external stakeholders. In all six universities, external stakeholders' involvement in extra-curricular activities was reported to rely on their timetable because they were busy, as noted in Khan & Zhang (2017).

Fifth, the support of teachers, administrative staff, and the public was also significant for the YUA's success in implementing GS. Although some academics voluntarily led some extra-curricular activities, in YUA leaders' experience, many teachers, administrative staff, and the public did not consider participating in the YUA's activities as learning but playing, so they tended to reject supporting the YUA's activities. This further evidenced a lack of clarity in communicating GS implementation strategy to staff in the universities, resulting in disharmony between groups of stakeholders involved in the implementation.

Finally, YUA leadership also influenced the effectiveness of the YUA's operation in implementing GS. They are often the ones who decided the activities to be organized, skills experts to be invited, and where social engagement activities to take place. All of those were associated with their perception of the importance and relevance of GS, their experience in operating the YUA, and their networking with external stakeholders such as alumni, local employers, skills experts, or local authorities. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that their perception about GS is in line with institutional perception, to foster them with developing leadership skills and social networks so that they can devote more for GS implementation via extra-curricular activities.

In short, although the YUA supported the implementation of GS in their university significantly, the extent to which the YUA could contribute to the implementation appeared to be determined by (i) university types, (ii) the perceived role of the YUA, (iii) university reputation and networking, (iv) student participation, (v) support of teachers, administrative staff, and the public, and the (vi) YUA leadership. Contrary to staff's and students' perception that extra-curricular activities are not important for GS development, or there should not be planned participation for these activities (Clark et al., 2015), findings in this section suggest that it is better to help the YUA plan and organize these activities to facilitate their work and increase student engagement. Only when they do so will the YUA's extra-curricular activities be the main channel to impart GS to students, as most Vietnamese universities are employing now.

Final Thoughts

This study found that Vietnamese universities conceptualized the implementation of GS as developing work-readiness for students. With that concept, the universities developed GS for students via both curriculum-based and extra-curricular activities using a student-centered approach, which included the WIL. The implementation was carried out university-wide or school-wide. The analysis showed that the adoption of GS implementation models in these universities was influenced by several factors, among which (i) curriculum autonomy, (ii) connections with external stakeholders, and (iii) effective leadership to engage stakeholders and harness institutional advantages were the three major influencers.

The differences in design and execution of GS implementation in these university can be simply explained by Bourdieu's concepts of social field, habitus, and capital (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As the social field has changed in the needs for developing GS for students, foremost by the MOET policies, these institutions had to act and react accordingly: teaching and assessing GS more prominently for compliance purposes. However, a lack of capital, or resources, limited them from implementing it as their wish. As such, they had to "feel the game to perform in particular ways, align oneself with the 'taste' of the field, or have agency while also to be shaped by circumstance both materially and socially (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 166). In this case, they made good use of the capital plus previous experiences in teaching GS (i.e., part of their habitus) to design and executed GS development models most feasible within their institutional contexts.

Although the study is most relevant to Vietnamese universities, findings and recommendations from this study can help universities struggling with developing

GS for students. It is recommended that extra-curricular activities should be an integral component of the institutional GS implementation model if there is a lack of curriculum autonomy. Forging relationships with external stakeholders, especially employers, will benefit the implementation, but this should go in hand with closely collaborating with them, instead of relying on them. University leadership must be improved to most efficiently coordinate the implementation tasks, both on campus and at the workplace.

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Chapter 10
A Malaysian Research University's Initiative to Develop International Students' Employability Skills

Jasvir Kaur Nachatar Singh

Abstract Enhancing international students' employability skills is an increasing concern of universities around the world. Little is known about how non-Western higher education institutions are developing employability of international students. This chapter fills the literature gap by investigating key initiatives and strategies adopted by a Malaysian research university in enhancing employability of international students, thereby contributing to international student development scholarship. Thematic analysis of 55 semi-structured interviews with postgraduate international students and staff members revealed that this university has initiated several within-curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular initiatives to develop internationals students' discipline-related skills, soft skills and cross-cultural/interpersonal skills. The chapter discusses differences in the adoption of these initiatives compared with those adopted by universities in the West and explains the causes of such differences.

Introduction

International education has become a big industry in many countries, not just in the West but also in Asia. One of the primary reasons for international students to gain education abroad is to obtain excellent employment prospects (Singh, 2019a; Singh & Jack, 2018). However, developing employability for international students has not received adequate attention (Tomlinson, 2007). In Asia, Malaysia has been identified as an international student hub due to exponential growth in numbers of international students (Knight, 2014). Based on the latest statistics, in 2018 there were 131,514 international students (undergraduates and postgraduates) studying in public and private universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2019), compared to 80,750 in 2009 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). In 2017, there were 21,170

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postgraduate international students enrolled at public universities and 10,872 postgraduate international students at private universities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018).

Scholarly articles on international students (Alsahafi & Shin, 2017; Singh, 2015) have been skewed toward understanding adjustment challenges faced by this cohort of students but are inadequate on their employability journey. Although enhancing international students' employability is one of the top agendas of universities around the world, little is known from non-Western perspectives on how higher learning institutions are developing employability of international students. This chapter thus fills the gap from a non-Western perspective, investigating key initiatives and strategies adopted by one of the Malaysian research universities in enhancing employability of international students. It thereby contributes to international student development research.

Employability Concepts and Employability Development Initiatives: International Perspectives and Practices

The purpose of this section is to review the literature on what is understood as employability, together with employability initiatives taken by universities around the world, especially in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom. The concept of employability has been researched for more than two decades by prominent Western scholars such as Bridgstock (2009), Hillage and Pollard (1998), Jackson (2016), McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) and Tomlinson (2017). The concept has evolved over time and it is fluid, multidimensional, multifaceted, complex and fuzzy. This is because the concept of employability impacts differently on various stakeholders and there is misalignment between them, thus creating tensions and diverse expectations (Kinash et al., 2014). For instance, for employers, graduate employability is understood as the behavioral competence displayed by graduates with a wider range of personal, performative and organizational skills, as opposed to just possessing academic qualifications (Brown & Hesketh, 2004; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). For students, employability is a "measure of their absolute potential to attain and undertake future employment" (Tomlinson, 2007, p. 292), and they therefore come to understand the importance of attitudes as well as orientations in developing their employability. Tomlinson (2008) further argues that "students increasingly [view] their employability as matter of what they are about as individuals, as much as their technical know-how and cognitive skills" (p. 58). For policymakers, employability resonates with labor market volatility and individual employability skills and attributes.

Although there are differing views on employability, as a response to changing labor market demands, higher education institutions worldwide have been given a mandate by government (policymakers) and the industry players (employers) to improve, enhance and strengthen employability of students (Mok et al., 2016). Since the 1960s, employability discussion has been prominent in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (Divan et al., 2019). Institutional evidence from these countries will therefore be discussed in detail. Against this backdrop, higher education institutions have broadly categorized employability strategies into three main groups: (1) academic curriculum (within-curriculum), (2) organizing complementary classes alongside the main curriculum (co-curriculum) and (3) organizing activities outside the curriculum (non-credit, extra-curricular activities) (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Barrie et al., 2009).

Under the first category, Jackson and Bridgstock (2020) reveal that employability-related activities that are integrated into the curriculum act as a formal component of students' learning and may form part of their assessment. Bridgstock and Jackson (2019) present a selection of pedagogic approaches that develop students' employability. For example, "complex collaborative problem-solving, inquiry-based or research-based learning in authentic [situations]" (p. 479) is adopted by higher education teachers to enhance professional or disciplinary capabilities and lifelong capabilities, suggesting a possible improvement in employability skills such as problem-solving and communication. In Australian universities, a reflective practice journal is one form of assessment to provide opportunities to students to look back on what they have learnt. This practice enhances students' time management and organization skills, critical thinking skills, self-confidence building and teamwork skills (via group work) (Sarkar et al., 2020). However, there are disadvantages in using such reflective journals: for instance, lack of clear guidance around the reflection assessment may cause confusion among students in understanding assessment objectives and may lead to their not valuing the reflective process; in addition, if this assessment is not graded, students will disregard it (Sarkar et al., 2020; Wesselink et al., 2010).

The second category includes co-curricular initiatives that "are facilitated by the university yet sit outside the students' formal course of study, often designed and delivered by central services, such as careers provision" (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2020, p. 2). For example, in the United Kingdom and Australia, universities offer career services to students, such as guidance in resume writing or assistance with mock job interviews (Atlay & Harris, 2000; Singh, 2020a). However, a recent study by Singh (2020a) proposes that career services provided by the universities to international students are skewed toward a "one-size-fits-all" mentality. Career services should accommodate international students' needs, such as providing tailor-made CVs and resume writing workshops to build their global careers, not just in host or home countries but also in third country labor markets. Bridgstock and Jackson (2019) further reveal that if a student is interested in enterprise and entrepreneurship, then that student "may want to participate in further or additional learning focussed on applied innovation and enterprise thinking, or developing their start-up and venture management skills" (pp. 479–480) via internships and/or paid employment (Nghia, 2019). Although internships and paid employment have attributed to developing students' employability skills such as technical as well as soft skills (Maelah et al., 2014), there are limited opportunities for students, especially international students, to become involved in these activities (i.e., placements) due to issues with English proficiency and limited local networks (Singh, 2020a). However, Nghia (2019) further argues that, with more emphasis on internships, students may be discouraged in developing their soft skills in classroom-based subjects. In spite of this, Mason, Williams and Cranmer (2009) report that structured work experience through sandwich courses and related programs, as well as employers' involvement in designing degree courses and having clear delivery of courses, have "positive effects on the ability of graduates to secure employment in 'graduate-level' jobs" (p. 1).

The third category consists of extra-curricular activities, which are defined as "non-academic activities that are conducted under the auspices of the school but occur outside of normal classroom time and are not part of the curriculum" (Bartkus et al., 2012, p. 698). Bartkus et al. (2012) and other scholars from Australia (Nghia, 2019; Tran, 2017) provide a wide ranging list of extra-curricular activities that students are able to participate in. For example, student clubs or societies (ranging from cultural to social organizations), service learning, student exchange, overseas study programs, students' participation in staff research publications and sporting groups. Buckley and Lee (2018) propose that participation in these extra-curricular activities is broadly perceived as positive in enhancing students' employability. It assists students to acquire skills such as communication, self-management and confidence, teamwork and problem-solving, which are highly in demand among employers (Khoo et al., 2018). Most importantly, extra-curricular activities can be recorded in a student's career portfolio and be shown at job interviews (Tomlinson, 2017). In the United States, extra-curricular activities include invitations to recruiters from companies to come to campuses during career fair weeks to outline job opportunities for students, and promote industry networking events and industry mentoring schemes (Bridgstock & Jackson, 2019). In these events, students are able to communicate with recruiters and seek further insider information on what it is like to work at that specific organization and take note on how to develop their resumes and how to address interview questions (Nicholas & Handley, 2019). These initiatives mainly build "students' social capital and professional networks" (Bridgstock & Jackson, 2019, p. 470). Jackson and Bridgstock (2020) propose that mentoring is also classified as an extra-curricular activity and may provide value to students to broaden their networks and to a lesser extent create employment prospects. Although these initiatives are deemed to provide hands-on experience for international students to gain a sense of a real-world working environment (Tran & Soejatminah, 2016), many students disregard the importance of these activities (Nghia, 2019) because they are much more focused on gaining and enhancing their hard skills (degree/qualifications) (Singh, 2020a), as opposed to developing their soft skills.

Bridgstock and Jackson (2019) argue that many universities around the world have strategically embedded institutional approaches but they propose an integrated approach to develop student employability is much preferred, as it will have a greater impact on students' development as a whole. They further argue that with integrated design "student learning can be progressive and scaffolded" (p. 479) and will further develop students' capabilities and skills. Although universities in English-speaking countries have designed employability initiatives to include diverse groups of students who are disadvantaged in the job market—such as international students (Bridgstock & Jackson, 2019; Gribble & McRae, 2017)—according to recent research by Singh (2020a), more needs to be done in this space, such as educating international students on the importance of internships or volunteering opportunities for gaining relevant work experience and obtaining employment opportunities upon graduation.

Employability Development Initiatives in Malaysian Universities

Malaysia was an agriculture-dependent economy in the early 1970s, but by the twenty-first century it had shifted to a knowledge-based economy (Singh, 2020b). The economic shift correspondingly changed the focus of higher education institutions in producing highly skilled knowledge workers for the Malaysian labor market (Sirat, 2006). As a result, the government made a huge investment in higher education institutions, producing a high number of graduates to support that knowledge-based economy (Yusof & Jamaluddin, 2017). Along with this massification, the Malaysian higher education sector has also welcomed international students since early 2000. Malaysian graduates, according to Cheong et al. (2018) and Seetha (2014), lacked employability skills such as communication, possessing a positive attitude, teamwork skills, analytical and critical thinking, creativity and English language skills. Correspondingly, Malaysian employers were also unhappy with local graduates' employability skills (Fong et al., 2014). Hence, higher education institutions have introduced several initiatives to enhance and develop employability of domestic students in particular.

As a first response, Malaysian universities embedded authentic assessments into the academic curriculum (within-curriculum). For instance, one of the authentic assessments included developing a business plan to grow entrepreneurial skills of postgraduate students (Fong et al., 2014). Universities are also strongly encouraged to include industry representatives (i.e., employers) in designing their curriculum, because they know exactly what skills are required from graduates (Ma'dan et al., 2020). Unfortunately, Ma'dan et al. (2020) report that the success of this collaboration is still in its infancy due to the low uptake from universities. Despite this limitation, a compulsory career-based learning approach called an industrial training program was included in courses provided by higher learning institutions (Ma'dan et al., 2020). This program offers students between three and six months working in industry. As a result, students gain work experience relevant to their field of study as well as enhance their technical and interpersonal skills (Ma'dan et al., 2020). Nazron et al. (2017) further reveal that students who have undergone this training program are highly likely to gain employment upon graduation because they display a high level of employability skills such as teamwork, professionalism and ethics, as well as ICT skills.

As co-curricular initiatives, higher education institutions have established career expos on campus to exchange information and knowledge on jobs offered in the labor market as offers of job interview and resume writing workshops (Yusof & Jamaluddin, 2017). In addition, since 2007, the Ministry of Higher Education has directed all public universities to offer internships to all final year students (especially undergraduates) “to provide more opportunities for students to have early exposure to the workplace environment” (Chan, 2011, p. 6) as well as develop students’ employability skills, such as communication, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills. Students in Bhattacharyya et al. (2009) further affirm that their workplace communicative practices (verbal and written), presentation and people management skills (Cheong et al., 2014) were enhanced via internship involvement. Students with internship experience are more likely to be hired by employers because they are able to adapt quickly to the work culture and are able to learn their job in a shorter time (Cheong et al., 2014).

Universities also offer a wide range of extra-curriculum activities such as participation in sports, culturally based societies and martial arts clubs for students to improve their employability skills and to develop versatility among graduates (Abd Majid et al., 2020; Fahimirad et al., 2019). For example, engineering students in Ooi’s (2020) research were encouraged to participate in activities such as non-governmental organization activity, voluntary work and leadership development activity and to organize events such as competitions and workshops to develop their skills—social skills, self-expression and leadership. Although participation in extra-curricular activity is not mandatory in Malaysian universities, Cheong and Narayanan (2020) find that participation in these activities increases the probability of quick employment for graduates. To the author’s knowledge, there is only one research study by Singh (2019b) that investigates the benefits of participating in extra-curriculum activities by postgraduate international students; Singh states that, with positive engagement with extra-curriculum activities, postgraduate international students can develop their graduate employability skills, such as communication, networking, management and teamwork skills.

These initiatives are mainly offered to local students in Malaysian universities and limited knowledge is evident as to how universities are developing employability skills for international students. As international education is a growing business in the higher education sector, and international students invest in it to enhance their career prospects, it is necessary to understand how universities are moving in this regard. Without doing so, international education in Malaysia may not be sustained because of policies for post-study work and residency that are unfavorable compared to those of other host countries.

The Present Study

The study reported in this chapter explores how Malaysian universities are developing employability for international students. The research question is:

- *What are the key strategies adopted by Malaysian universities to develop employability skills for international students?*

Due to time and budget constraints, it was narrowed down to a case study that involved a pioneering research-intensive university situated in the Northern part of Peninsular Malaysia and with a promising and gradual trend of attracting international postgraduate students due to provision of strong Science, Medical Health, Engineering and Arts research facilities.

A qualitative methodology and semi-structured interview (Merriam, 1998) were used to explore participants' lived experiences in developing employability of international students within this setting. Approval from La Trobe University's Faculty Human Ethics Committee was sought consistent with the guidelines of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. Research participants were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity and therefore are not identified in this paper by name, gender or age. The identification of the research site is also kept anonymous.

Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were adopted to identify and recruit participants. Purposive sampling is one that "must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61) about the research topic. For this study, target participants were international postgraduate students, academic staff directly involved in teaching and/or supervising and professional staff members provided academic and non-academic support services to the students. The snowball sampling technique helps recruit participants based on reference of another participant, which provides quick access to information-rich research participants (Patton, 1990) based on referral by another participant. Using these techniques, the researchers recruited a total of 55 research participants: 33 postgraduate international students (IS), 12 professional staff (PS) and 10 academic staff (AS). Their demographic details are presented in Tables 10.1 and 10.2.

The 55 semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted from November 2011 to February 2012. All interviews were conducted in English, audio-recorded (with participants' permission) and transcribed, and typically lasted on average 42 min.

The thematic analysis method proposed by Van Manen (1990) was adopted to analyze the data, because it focuses on understanding the lived experiences of research participants regarding the phenomenon of employability. The author followed two of three "reading" textual data offered by van Manen (1990). The three approaches were (1) the holistic reading approach to achieve a holistic understanding of the phenomenon; (2) the selective reading approach, highlighting significant statements to formulate meanings; and (3) a detailed or line-by-line reading approach that looks at every sentence. The author used holistic and selective reading approaches to analyze the data to become familiar with the depth and breadth of the content (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2008). An inductive approach was embraced to manually analyze, code and highlight quotes that supported the codes, interpreting the data by collating codes into possible themes that focused on developing employability of postgraduate international students; these actions then generated a thematic

Table 10.1 Demographic details of postgraduate international students

Categories	Number
Gender	
Male	21
Female	12
Nationality	
India	4
Iraq	4
Iran	4
Yemen	3
Nigeria	3
China	3
Indonesia	3
Sri Lanka	2
Pakistan	2
Palestine	2
Cambodia	1
Bangladesh	1
Somalia	1
Faculty	
Pharmacy	5
Education	5
Communication	4
Humanities	3
Computer Science	3
Architecture	3
Biology	2
Management	2
Language	2
Industrial Technology	1
Physics	1
Mathematics	1
Business	1
Degree	
PhD	23
Masters	10

Table 10.2 Demographic details of academic and professional staff members

Academic staff		Professional staff	
Categories	Number	Categories	Number
Gender		*Gender*	
Male	7	Female	8
Female	3	Male	4
Position		*Position*	
Dean	2	Deputy Registrar	1
Deputy Dean for Graduate Study	1	Assistant Registrar	3
Deputy Dean for Postgraduate and Research	2	Senior Assistant Registrar	1
Senior Lecturer	2	Residential Manager	2
Language Instructor	1	Librarian	3
Language Coordinator	1	Statistical Administrator	1
Lecturer	1	Editing Advisor	1
Academic title		*Work division*	
Professor	3	Postgraduate Student Office	6
Associate Professor	5	Library	3
Language Teachers	2	Hostel	2
		Faculty	1

map (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In a practical sense, interpretation in qualitative analysis is such that the researcher needs to make sense of the data and go beyond descriptive data, which includes "explaining the findings, answering 'why' questions, attaching significance to particular results and putting patterns into an analytic framework" (Patton, 1990, p. 375). Interpretation in this study is evident in the findings and discussion section, which is a review of the major findings in answering the research question and confirms or contradicts past studies or establishes new information and sets out limitations and suggestions for future research (Creswell, 2008).

Findings

The findings of this research are unique because this Malaysian university has taken several within-curriculum, co-curriculum and extra-curriculum initiatives to develop employability skills of international students that are not only related to soft skills but also enhance students' research skills and cross-cultural and interpersonal skills. These skills are deemed important in the global labor market because international students not only seek employment opportunities in their home country but also in the host country or in a third country (Gribble & McRae, 2017; Singh & Jamil, 2021).

Within-Curricular Initiatives

Consistent with Fong et al. (2014), this study found that authentic assessments were used as an important initiative within the curriculum for international students to develop their employability. At this research university, the Master's degree by coursework has a component of a research thesis and students need to complete this thesis to gain their qualification. The thesis component is embedded within the curriculum for students to develop not only their research skills but also presentation, writing and reading skills. It may also prepare students for a subsequent experience with publication:

> There is a thesis component in my Master's degree. I have done the proposal presentation and I have written my Chapters 1 and 2 in my first semester itself, as I want to complete my degree in a year. Now I am writing my Chapter 3 and my questionnaire is sent out to my research participants. (IS 26)
>
> I developed my research skills via conducting mix-method study, writing and publication skills, as I produced two papers in international journal from my Master's thesis. (IS 32)

Authentic group and individual assessments, such as fieldwork or producing videos, are embedded in the curriculum, particularly for courses such as Project Management and Communication. Master's students stated:

> We have field work that needs us to visit construction sites and meet the project manager and interview them to retrieve appropriate information for our assessment. (IS 26)
>
> I have to produce a short movie which is part of my assessment and I need to research a lot to produce the short movie. (IS 3)

This authentic assessment provides international postgraduate students with opportunities to enhance their interpersonal communication, interview, research and report-writing skills. According to Fook and Sidhu (2010), authentic assessments help students "to learn from doing and to think critically, and the presentation makes the students to be more confident and communicative in front of the audiences" (p. 160). As a result, using authentic assessment tasks can result in the development of many skills useful for international research students.

Co-curricular Initiatives

Research Skills Training Workshops

Consistent with Singh (2018), in order for postgraduate international students to develop sound research knowledge and skills, it is vital for universities in Malaysia to provide research-related workshops. At the university level, the Postgraduate Student Office involved in this study offers various workshops on developing research skills of international students, such as writing, statistics, presentation and other related research skills. At the faculty level, participants reported several customized workshops provided to international students: statistics, research method, academic writing, literature review and proposal presentations and time management. Also at the faculty level, a Research Colloquium is organized as a platform for international students to present their proposals, their ideas on research and research findings and to receive constructive feedback from academics. In the participants' view, the co-curricular activities offered by the Office are generic for all students in the university, whereas workshops and the research colloquium organized at the faculty level appear to develop both research and soft skills for students with a focus on the disciplinary culture:

> The Postgraduate Student Office actually offers a variety of workshops, such as data analysis, how to write your thesis, how to manage your supervisor, time management and many other workshops. (AS 5)
>
> So, we have some workshops for them [such as] statistical workshops, research methodology, writing Chapter 1, establishing their research problem, and how to write a literature review. The [Postgraduate Student Office] may provide more general workshops but we focus more on our educational context. (AS 2)
>
> We conducted the Postgraduate Colloquium twice every year. So this is the place where all postgraduate students come and present their research or some of the students just want to throw up their ideas before they send their proposal and then some of them are at their final stage of their data analysis and they want to present their analysis so that they can get feedback from the lecturers. (AS 2)

International research students at this university are from different backgrounds, some with very limited previous research experience. As a result of attending these workshops, international students were able to apply what they learned from the workshops in their research projects and studies. For example, postgraduate international students have claimed that they have developed a sound knowledge of academic writing and research methodology, and become able to manage and conduct their research activities properly. Some also stated that they could develop skills necessary for their future academic career such as journal writing and statistical analysis skills. Through these research studies, they could realize possible academic career paths and were inspired by the success of other academics in their areas. Their responses are captured in the following quotes:

> Attending workshops offered by the Postgraduate Student Office has upgraded my knowledge, mostly, research method and academic writing and statistics. (IS 15)
>
> Workshops that the Postgraduate Student Office [provided…] helps us a lot because now I am in the process of writing my proposal, so I get the idea exactly, how to write a proposal from the activities and the facilities they gave to us. (IS 19)
>
> I got my PhD so I want to teach and also become a Professor in my own country. (IS 20)
>
> [The benefits of the workshops include] not only finishing your PhD but becoming an independent researcher and the ability to publish in journals, as well as the ability to present in conferences. (IS 4)

Developing one's employability skills does depend on the nature of the employment that one is aspiring to. This finding then encapsulates the notion that employability is not a "one-size-fits-all" approach to employability development, which aligns with Jackson and Wilton (2017).

Personal Development Workshops

At the university level, soft skills and personal development workshops are offered to international students and led by the Postgraduate Student Office:

> At the Postgraduate Student Office, we provide over 100 personal development workshops where we also invite people from the industry to provide differing perspectives on skills development. (AS 1)

> We provide personal skills workshops such as communication, stress management, work values and leadership skills. (PS 12)

AS1, an academic staff member, revealed that these workshops are intentionally organized mainly for enhancing international graduates' employability. In these workshops, communication skills, stress management skills, work-related values, leadership skills and other related personal development workshops are offered to postgraduate international students to cope with their non-academic issues. In students' experience, these workshops are effective for them. They apply the skills learnt from these workshops for organizing a conference (IS 27), for their presentations in class or for public speaking opportunities (IS 4).

Extra-curricular Initiatives

Student Ambassador Program (SAP)

International postgraduate students are also able to develop their employability skills through joining the Student Ambassador Program (SAP). The SAP is an extra-curriculum initiative developed in 2008 for incoming international students to obtain first-hand information about the university and Malaysia by pairing them with students from the same country of origin. Detailed information on this program can be found in Singh (2019b). This program aims to foster the transition of future students into the university. Participation in the SAP has enhanced international students' interpersonal communication and networking skills:

> I am given a chance to be a student ambassador and being student ambassador means I can meet a lot of new people and communicate widely. (IS 2)

> I am making a wider network by working with multi-cultural students. (IS 30)

> I have more chance to communicate with other students and make friends from other countries because of being a Student Ambassador. (IS 9)

Consistent with Singh (2019b), international postgraduate students are extremely grateful because they are able to develop their interpersonal communication skills and sharpen their networking skills with other multi-cultural students.

Cultural Activities

The university also organizes cultural activities to enhance cross-cultural/interpersonal skills of international students between domestic students and international students. It is observed that cross-cultural/interpersonal skills are currently included as one of the employability skills because cultural competency is such an important element to develop if future graduates want to seek employment in a new country. Specifically, the Familiarization Program was reported to introduce the rich Malaysian culture to international students by organization visits to interesting local places. The program offers opportunities for international students to develop friendships with each other and with locals.

International postgraduate students agreed that the cultural activities helped enlarge their knowledge, develop their cross-cultural communication skills and extend their social network:

> Over here we come across different nationals, and when we talk to them, we come across their language, their customs, and I love to talk to people of different languages and it broadens your vision about different culture in the world. (IS 25)

> I make friends and widen my network with other students and also I do learn about different people's background and their culture, as well as their belief system and values. (IS 26)

These skills and social networks will be useful for their future career. However, as this is an extra-curricular activity, it may be ignored by many students, as has been found in other contexts (Jackson, 2018; Nghia, 2019). One student emphasized that international students need to proactively mix with other local and international students to understand different cultures and establish social bonds:

> I saw international students just live with friends from the same country. So if you just stay with your friends, you cannot connect to other cultures, and then you cannot make a new friends. Communication with local students and contact with the local culture and local community is very important. (IS 9)

This suggests that developing employability skills via such extra-curricular activities requires appropriate student attitudes and beliefs, as found by Singh (2019b). Without such metacognition, they may not engage with such learning opportunities outside the formal curriculum.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study reported in this chapter aimed to explore initiatives to develop employability for international students in Malaysia, focusing on a case research-intensive university situated in the Northern part of Peninsular Malaysia. It found several within-curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular initiatives that the university has adopted to develop discipline-related skills (e.g., research and publication skills) and soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, problem-solving skills) and cross-cultural/interpersonal skills in order to enhance international students' employability. The programs included authentic assessment, specialized research and personal development workshops, the Student Ambassador Program (SAP) and cultural activities such as the Familiarization Program.

The initiatives implemented by the Malaysian university are relatively distinctive and can be explained by Bourdieu's (1998) notions of habitus and social field concepts. Social field can be understood as the context in which the Malaysian university functions, with its regulations, norms and standards. The way the university acts and reacts to align with such regulations, norms and standards is its habitus. The social field and habitus mutually influence each other and can serve as a force for growth. Specially, in this study, the initiatives adopted to develop employability for international students appear to be a response to the socio-cultural and political that frame Malaysia as an international higher education hub. In Malaysia, although the higher education field is "a structured social space with autonomy to establish rules, patterns of normal behaviour and forms of authority" (Clark & Zukas, 2013, p. 212), the Malaysian universities are still bound to the government's guidelines and procedures.

Unlike the cases of international students who are able to seek work experiences in English-speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, international students in Malaysia are not allowed to work or be involved in a placement outside of the university due to the strict guidelines imposed by the government (Ministry of Higher Education, 2009). Such tight restrictions have a negative impact on students developing their employability skills, especially communication, teamwork, decision making, self-confidence and critical thinking (Khoo et al., 2018) in Malaysia. Against this drawback, this university has proactively and innovatively designed co-curricular and extra-curricular initiatives that enable international students to acquire those necessary employability skills as well as research and cross-cultural skills. Secondly, Malaysia has this aspiration to encourage international students to return home and contribute to their own society and community through their knowledge and research skills (Singh & Jack, 2018). As a consequent, there are limited extra-curricular activities designed for international students to enhance their networking skills with future employers in Malaysia via inviting recruiters to the campus. However, international students at this university are building their social and research networks with other international and domestic students through institutional programs such as the SAP and Familiarization Program and other workshops. According to Bourdieu (1998), such institutional efforts are able to create positive impact on the social field (in the long run), which will benefit the communities (i.e., international and domestic students, teaching and professional staff members) in the university in particular and to Malaysian international education in general. According to Hugo (2003), international students, once they graduate, have developed diplomatic ties and networks with other international students while studying and this results in further research collaboration.

These strategies have positively influenced international students' development of unique employability skills in their host institution, which contributes to filling the literature gap on how non-Western universities (in this case, Malaysia) are uniquely providing in developing employability skills for their international students. However, these initiatives are merely the first step, because more strategies need to be included, such as paid or unpaid local and international internships and volunteering in non-profit organizations in order to gain related work experience, customized career counseling services to provide guidance on developing resumes, on retrieving job information in home, host or third countries, work-integrated learning to provide authentic simulation of workplace scenarios, and involvement in clubs and societies to expand their social capital (networking).

An important implication of this study is that co-curricular and extra-curricular initiatives should be context- and culture-bound, as opposed to just following the "herd" mentality in providing the similar universal employability strategies for undergraduate and postgraduate students that are adopted by Western higher education institutions. Singh (2020a) observes that the lack of customized career services provided to international students in Australia has been shown to disadvantage them in their future employment opportunities. For Malaysia to be recognized as a global international higher education hub (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011), it is vital for its higher learning institutions to initiate necessary employability strategies for employability skills development and subsequently attract further international students to Malaysia. The hub status can also be realized via soft power outcomes where international students develop and transfer vital employability skills—soft skills and research skills—when they return to contribute to their home countries and societies via knowledge research transfer (Singh, 2017; Singh & Jamil, 2021).

In short, through the case of a research-intensive university, this study found that in Malaysian universities many initiatives have been organized as part of the curriculum, co-curriculum or extra-curriculum to develop employability for international research students. The findings suggest that these initiatives are affected by the context in which Malaysian international education is bound, but they appear effective in preparing students for their future career. Like many similar studies, this study has limitations. The research was based on information gathered from semi-structured interviews from a single research university in Malaysia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Further research could overcome this limitation by having a mixed-methods research design from public and private educational institutions in Malaysia and beyond. Future research directions could include observational methods to further study employability challenges faced by international students as well information from staff members in Malaysia.

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Chapter 11
Beyond the Hospital and Entrepreneurial Models of Journalism Education: Case Studies of Work-Integrated Learning Models in Wise Practice

Faith Valencia-Forrester

Abstract The education and training of journalism students have faced some significant challenges over the past several years. While practice-based learning still plays a significant role in journalism programs internationally, shrinking newsrooms and rapidly changing media practices have reduced the number of internship opportunities for educators. Tertiary institutions have had to innovate to incorporate necessary practical experience to develop student employability. Significantly, equitable access to the practical experience required by industry presents a growing concern. This chapter seeks to critique the dominant models of work-integrated learning (WIL) in journalism education, explore emerging models of WIL, and investigate the value of these innovations in WIL models. In offering a critical review of the current approaches to WIL in journalism education, this chapter also presents several university-led WIL case studies as options for expanding and increasing equitable opportunities for journalism degree students. Ensuring equitable access to practical opportunities, informed by current and future industry requirements, is vital in providing graduates with the skills and experience necessary for employment.

Introduction

The media and communications industries are facing times of rapid change. Factors such as changing technology, globalization, declining advertising revenues for traditional media, and the concentration of media ownership have resulted in a dramatically reconfigured media landscape which, in turn, has seen a significant reduction in quality employment opportunities for journalists (Hirst, 2010; Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2016). Consolidated newsrooms and increased competition mean that having the skills and experience is not enough; journalists need to build a brand in media markets (Cowgill, 2014). The knowledge and skills base of journalists has expanded to include not only social media, photojournalism, and desktop publishing but also

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those of an entrepreneur (Mensing & Ryfe, 2013). Given the challenging environment journalism graduates are facing, it is a critical time to examine how best to educate beginning journalists. As Deuze (2006) has argued, the "training of journalists is a subject much debated – but only rarely researched" (p. 19).

Given the changing nature of skillsets and the monopolization of media ownership, it is vital that journalism students develop an understanding of the role of journalism in society, alongside the necessary practical skills. Cohen (2015a) proposes an approach embedded in an understanding of journalists "as worker, as citizen, or as activist" (p. 517). Indeed, Sheridan Burns and Matthews (2017) suggest that the pertinent question for both newsrooms and classrooms is no longer "who is a journalist?" but instead, "what is journalism?" These changes represent a fundamental shift for the media industry and, if tertiary journalism education is to remain relevant, educators must keep pace with these changes.

The question that remains then is how to design journalism education that fosters a critical understanding of journalism in society while still building practical skills, industry experience, and enhancing graduate employability. Work-integrated learning, or WIL, is a "chameleon term" that involves numerous disciplines and incorporates multiple processes (Orrell, 2011, p. 5). Jackson et al. (2017) explain that it is common to see terms such as "experiential learning," "work-based learning," "professional learning," and "cooperative education" used synonymously in referencing WIL (p. 36). Given the definitional difficulties surrounding WIL, Patrick et al. (2009) suggest that WIL is best engaged as an "umbrella" term for programs that integrate student academic and workplace knowledge. Thus, WIL may refer to "the intentional integration of theory and practice knowledge" (Orrell, 2011, p. 1) through a "theory-to-practice approach of integrating disciplinary knowledge and skills with practical applications" (Bowen, 2018, p. 1148). Within journalism education, internships are the most traditional and visible form of WIL (Bromley et al., 2012), although a number of authors have raised concerns over the equitability and accessibility of internships in the industry (Mabweazara & Taylor, 2012; Thomas & Goc, 2004). University-led WIL presents a way around such issues of equitable access. There are two models of university-led WIL in journalism education that this article seeks to engage with: the teaching hospital model and the entrepreneurship model. These models represent promising approaches to various aspects of WIL in journalism education despite notable gaps. Building on these models, this chapter seeks to critique the dominant models of WIL in journalism education, explore emerging WIL models developed using a wise practice framework, and investigate the value of these emerging WIL models in stakeholders' experience with the models.

Literature Review

Dominant WIL Models in Journalism Education: Teaching Hospitals and Entrepreneurship

The teaching hospital model first emerged in the U.S. and, as the name suggests, began in the health discipline. It has since spread across disciplines and encompasses a type of WIL that sees students, educators, and professionals work together in a newsroom (Newton, 2013). Anderson (2014) suggests that the teaching hospital approach to journalism education may address the deficits in community news production that are emerging. "Journalism schools, housed at relatively stable community anchor institutions like universities, have the capacity to regularly produce the kind of relevant news that is being abandoned as newspapers shrink and business models collapse" (Anderson, 2014, p. 65). In terms of student learning outcomes, the teaching hospital approach seems to be effective given the employment rates of over 90% of students from a journalism Master's program that employed the hospital model (see Klinger, 2013).

There are two important critiques of the teaching hospital method. The first refers to the potential exploitation of students as free labor in university newsrooms. Picard (2015) suggests that the reason the teaching hospital approach is gaining traction is because news outlets are promoting the approach so that "students will be placed in their enterprises as unpaid or poorly paid workers" (p. 9). A related critique comes from Mensing and Ryfe (2013), who argue that the teaching hospital approach frames content delivery as the primary purpose of journalism and does not produce graduates equipped for a changing media landscape. That means journalism educators must be wary of approaches that exploit students for free labor, and they must also ensure that students have a broader understanding of the role of journalism in society beyond content production.

The entrepreneurial approach to journalism education emerged from the critiques of the teaching hospital approach. Mensing and Ryfe (2013) suggest that journalism educators should be preparing students for changing careers and encouraging students to engage in experimentation. In addition, they argue that journalism education should incorporate teaching strategies for students to understand audiences, engage with social media, focus on demand, be publication-driven, and extend their networks through actual reporting. This shift toward entrepreneurial values is what Neff (2012) terms "venture labor" and is a response to changes in workplace security, particularly pertinent to the changes within the media industry. The move toward the entrepreneurial approach results from two things: first, the increasing precarity of the workforce and reducing traditional career opportunities, and second, the huge potential of new technology developments to create space for alternative media production and disrupt the media industry (Achtenhagen, 2017). Further, Holton (2016) argues for the increased importance of freelancers to traditional newsrooms; therefore, students should be prepared for precarity and the need to sell themselves and their work. This argument presents a way of preparing students for the uncertainties and opportunities present in the contemporary media landscape.

The entrepreneurial approach, however, has also been the subject of salient critiques. Cohen (2015a), in particular, argues that such an approach reinforces the dominant power relations of media capitalism while rendering the problem of precarious media work an individual rather than a structural problem. Entrepreneurial journalism education is not concerned with improving insecure working conditions, the commodification of journalistic labor, or the social role of journalism (Cohen, 2015a, p. 527). Expanding on this, Cohen criticizes the use of labor forces and devaluing of journalism as a craft through outsourcing, unpaid labor, metrics, and automation. She warns of the need for innovative approaches to journalism, less the future of journalism be reduced to "more pink slime" (Cohen, 2015b, p. 116). An entrepreneurial discourse promotes "journalists as atomized, competitive individuals" instead of framing the journalist as a "worker, as citizen, or as activist" (Cohen, 2015a, p. 517). Similarly, Anderson (2014) argues that journalism education would be better off focusing on media production literacy and encouraging students to take a critical view of the classic models of professional journalism. Overall, this involves reframing journalism education as a form of critical education that has the potential to benefit both future journalists and future citizens.

University-Led WIL: A Wise Practice Framework

A wise practice framework moves beyond the teaching hospital and entrepreneurial models and addresses the equity concerns around other models of WIL in journalism education. A fixed definition of a wise practice approach is elusive because "by its very nature [it] is idiosyncratic, contextual, textured and probably inconsistent, it is not standardized or off the shelf" (Davis Jr, 1997, p. 4). Wise practice suggests a reflexive, context-specific, engaged approach to teaching that is informed by the often tacit "professional knowledge base" of educators (Wineburg & Wilson, 1988, p. 58). This focus on context is highlighted by Wescott (2002), who explains that "there is a difference between best practice and the compromises needed in the real world which leads to "wise practice." Wise practice takes WIL objectives (professional skills development and professional experience) and positions inclusion and transformation at the center of the learning experience, understanding that "best practice" in one situation does not automatically present itself as the "best option."

Local context is of critical importance to a wise practice approach. As a first premise, wise practice is "strongly situational and context-bound" (Tyson, 2015, p. 232). Davis Jr (1997, p. 2) highlights this aspect, explaining that "wise practices are always situated thoroughly in their context." Context also represents an important part of Petrucka et al.'s (2016) comprehensive definition of wise practice, where they consider wise practices "to be those which are inclusive, locally relevant, sustainable, respectful, flexible, pragmatic, and encompassing all worldviews, and which consider historical, societal, cultural and environmental factors" (p. 181).

Because it is context-specific, wise practice demands a diversity and multiplicity of pedagogical approaches. Wesley-Esquimaux and Calliou (2010) suggest that wise practice legitimizes and recognizes non-western methods of receiving and sharing of knowledge, accommodates and allows for differences (cultures, identity, learning styles, abilities) within individuals as part of the collective. Expanding on this theme, Higgs (2012) posits wise practice as an appropriate approach to a rounded and more useful approach to education as it requires drawing on "multiple perspectives and many answers" (p. 75). At the same time, they explain that embracing wise practice requires "commitment, creativity, reflection, and openness to challenge" from educators (Riley et al., 2000, p. 366).

The wise practice has a relevant application in the way journalism is taught in an on-campus journalism education context. Yeager (2000) asserts that wise practice focuses on the "extraordinary" while "engaging students" through "critical thinking, interpretation and analysis," and generating "excitement about the content." Adopting a wise practice model would appear to allow for the idiosyncratic contextual and inconsistent manner of news production. By flipping the traditional work placement model and bringing industry into the classroom, it allows the student to learn directly from those who "possess wisdom of practice" (Davis Jr, 1997, p. 2).

Study 1: Using a Wise Practice Framework to Develop Inclusive WIL in Journal Education

Study Aims and Approaches

The aim of this study was to explore the development and use of emerging models of WIL under the wise practice framework. The emerging models are considered phenomena in this study. To capture and understand these phenomena, a collective case study methodology was adopted. Case studies align with the wise practice framework through their commitment to understanding a phenomenon "in-depth and within its real-life context" (Yin, 2017, p. 15). Also, given the theory orientation of this study, the case study approach enables the research to make theory-building possible (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Data Collection and Analysis

The cases were selected according to the principles of purposeful sampling with the key focus on the need to represent different models of equitable WIL practice (Mason, 2002) and were scaffolded and embedded throughout a journalism program. There were three models in this study: Flipped WIL, Event WIL, and Purpose WIL. Each of the models was developed through an integrated and interconnected series of separate

Table 11.1 Summary of cases

	Test case	Refined case	Capstone case
Flipped WIL	Radio Journalism	Television Journalism	News Production
Event WIL	G20 Newsroom	Blues on Broadbeach	Commonwealth Games
Purpose WIL	Project Safe Space	Mental Health and Refugees	Project Open Doors

bound cases. Each case was built on previous versions and culminated in a confirming capstone case. As Table 11.1 shows, cases in the Flipped WIL model included Radio Journalism (2014), Video/TV Journalism (2015), and News Production (2016); cases in the Event WIL model were G20 (2014), Blues on Broadbeach (2016), and the Commonwealth Games (2018); cases completed around the Purpose WIL model were Project Safe Space (2015), Mental Health Refugees (2016), and Project Open Doors (2017). Data were collected from each of the case studies through direct observation and a variety of media artifacts produced by stakeholders involved in the case studies in addition to the research journal that recorded additional thoughts, observations, and reflections of the researcher. The investigation of each of the WIL models involved a constant iteration between cases and the cyclical nature of the research-required cross-case comparison.

Results

Phases to Building Scaffolded WIL Throughout a Program Using a Wise Practice Framework

The design of these courses took place over four phases. The first phase is creating a purposeful space. Opportunities for university-led WIL are centered around the concept of a hybridized theory/practice space. The space created had a two-pronged focus on critical engagement with journalism and student employability. Each model's "space" was defined by the physical location, structural or online, and the issues-based space. Each of the models described in this article takes place in a purpose-built media center that is intentionally constructed as a newsroom rather than a classroom. The second phase is to ensure that students are adequately prepared to work in this space through induction and training. Students undergo a specialist induction training to prepare them for work in the space where the university-led WIL occurs. This was considered essential from the researcher's point of view to allow students to get the most out of the experience. Students reported the induction sessions as key sites of significant learning opportunities and transformational experiences. Thirdly, assessment items required students to be "engaged" in professional work practices. Because theoretical concepts were embedded within the course content and the assessment items, this process served to actively link theory and practice. In each case, students worked on professional artifacts (published or professional communication) that could be included in a portfolio of work to be utilized to evidence their experience for future job applications. This may have been content produced for a specially constructed website (Purpose WIL), a university-run multimedia website (Flipped WIL), or publication or broadcast via a media partner (Event WIL and Flipped WIL). Prior to exiting the WIL space, students were required to participate in an active, group debrief session, where students critically reflected on their experience, shared the experience with their peers, and this was another opportunity to link theoretical concepts with practice.

WIL Models Using a Wise Practice Framework in Journalism Education

Flipped WIL

Flipped WIL describes an approach to inclusive WIL that saw journalism students introduced to both the key theories and practical skills of news production through their engagement in professional practice in an on-campus newsroom broadcasting and/or publishing live to audiences outside the university community. Flipped WIL was designed as an overarching induction or foundation model for the subsequent models of WIL. As part of Flipped WIL, students participated in a series of scaffolded, multimedia journalism units that each focused on a different aspect of journalism and included a WIL component. Flipped WIL has obvious overlaps with the "teaching hospital" model of WIL (Mason, 2015, p. 25) and is also comparable to online simulation models (Eberholst et al., 2016; Holt et al., 2013). Yet there are three important elements that delineate Flipped WIL from simulations and the hospital model. First, with Flipped WIL, participants are offered accreditation as journalists and encouraged to think, act, and consider themselves as being equal to journalists working in mainstream media. Students are tasked with creating professional social media accounts and engage with professional journalists and significant organizations through their practice in each of the units. Second, a level of authenticity is further created by having participants operate from a dedicated space suitably identified as a newsroom or media center. Finally, Flipped WIL is embedded as part of the curriculum and built into the architecture of the program. Flipped WIL embeds industry engagement and interaction through the channels of content delivery, through academic/practitioner supervision, and by bringing industry into the on-campus newsroom.

The first case within the Flipped WIL model was the course Radio Journalism. Students were introduced to hybridized audio production, programming, and skills, including writing for broadcast and paneling. Students were required to produce timely, newsworthy content for live broadcast on a local radio station. Producing and presenting a news program allowed for reflecting "on action and in action" (Schön, 1992, p. 55), which helped students develop tacit knowledge, and a "feel" for news. There was an emphasis on students applying the theoretical components through practical assessment pieces. Students were constantly asked to engage critically with their practice around concepts underpinning journalism and media communication, including news values, audiences, reception studies, economies of news, and production processes. Students were shown how theory is applied in a real-world context. Pitching stories was a critical element of each iteration of the Flipped WIL model. As a way of addressing the limitations of the hospital model as potentially being a "vehicle of unexamined assumptions" (Young & Giltrow, 2015, p. 59) and to introduce the dimensions of the entrepreneurial model by helping students to re-evaluate what the role of journalism is and to "re-think journalistic practices" (Mensing & Ryfe, 2013, p. 27). Students were challenged to think about what and why they were pitching a story. This process facilitated broader conversations about what topics were given more time/coverage in the mainstream media and why, and what topics were marginalized in the media and why. Production meetings thus often evolved into important discussions about power, ethics and the news, news values, and media production considerations.

The second course in the Flipped WIL model built on the theories of journalism and practical skills developed in Radio Journalism was Television Journalism. Television Journalism required the students to experience the work environment of a television studio and newsroom. As in Radio Journalism, students in Television Journalism developed their understanding of journalism and communication theories, learned another set of technical production skills, and put these learnings into practice through the production of a 30-min televised news bulletin. Building on the skills developed in Radio Journalism reinforced learning from the previous unit while still introducing new skills.

The capstone course of this model of WIL was News Production. The course was designed as a capstone unit (Cullen, 2017) where students would bring their knowledge together to begin solidifying their professional identities as journalists. As this was one of the last courses that students would complete before graduation, students would soon be applying for jobs framed teaching from the outset. Students were encouraged to reflect on their skills in relation to contemporary job advertisements for journalist positions and consider how they could improve their competitiveness. Given that "the profession is demanding more from educators and students than ever before" (Wenger et al., 2018, p. 34), students were assessed on a range of skills, including multimedia content creation, sub-editing, feature writing, photography, and professional social media engagement. Students were encouraged to be creative in presenting their stories, which demonstrates how Flipped WIL introduces entrepreneurial elements into the university-led WIL experience to prepare students for the kind of "journalism that comes next" (Mensing & Ryfe, 2013, p. 33).

Event WIL

The second model of WIL that was explored through a capstone case study was Event WIL. Event WIL builds on the base model created within Flipped WIL and extends the student experience and the concept of bringing industry into the classroom. At the core of the Event WIL model is integrated partnerships with the industry.

Having industry personnel work from the university-led newsroom creates a shared professional space for students. Staffed by professional journalists, academics, and student journalists working side-by-side, students are part of a newsroom providing real-time coverage of a major media event working.

Manifestations of Event WIL are also evident in some of the models of journalism WIL outlined in the literature. There are several notable Australian cases that see student journalists covering media events such as the Special Olympic World Winter Games (Garrison, 2010), the South Australian World Police and Fire Games (Furlan, 2007), and Byron Bay's Bluesfest (St Clair, 2015). Indeed, Steel et al. (2007, p. 333) conclude their research by suggesting that there are "benefits of focusing on specific important events" around which "students become journalists for a short time" and suggest that further empirical work on the model is needed. Despite these similarities, Event WIL as conducted in this project differs from other examples of journalism WIL described in the literature. Five issues are relevant. First, the Event WIL model ensures a greater level of collaboration between the university and the media partner, with both parties' joint owners of the project. Second, Event WIL also places greater agency on the student journalist based on their experience gained during their participation in Flipped WIL. Third, Event WIL provides students with significant induction and training. The WIL experience is greatly enhanced by bringing specialists into the classroom and exposing students to issues such as dealing with vulnerable groups, working in a conflict zone, and risk management. Fourth, Event WIL leverages the WIL opportunities occurring before or surrounding the actual event. It therefore offers richer possibilities than other WIL in journalism approaches. Finally, Event WIL can be offered on an incredibly large scale such as was the case with the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the 2014 G20 Leaders' Summit or on a smaller localized scale as occurred with Blues on Broadbeach.

Three iterations of Event WIL were offered to students, with the model evolving and culminating in a capstone case study of the 2018 Commonwealth Games coverage. The first iteration of Event WIL took place around the 2014 G20 Leaders Summit in Brisbane (Australia) and involved establishing and operating the purposefully created Media Centre close to the event. This Media Centre facilitated a specialist industry work placement for third-year journalism students, run in conjunction with a major national media partner, to provide multi-platformed media coverage of events including and surrounding the G20 Leader Summit. The project not only served to establish closer ties and working relationships with the industry but also allowed students to produce a body of published work as evidence of their skills and knowledge. This model allowed students to practically demonstrate their readiness to work in the industry, with several students obtaining full-time employment as a direct result of their participation in the G20 newsroom.

The second iteration of Event WIL focused on a local music and arts festival called Blues on Broadbeach. The Blues on Broadbeach festival is an annual event held at the Gold Coast, one of Australia's largest free music festivals, drawing around 160,000 visitors over four days. This case study of Event WIL saw students cover two days of the event as an outside broadcast. Students sourced and conducted interviews and prepared content for broadcast and online coverage of the event. They liaised with the publicists of performing artists to arrange interviews and were challenged to identify new and interesting angles to tell different stories about the festival in an engaging and interesting manner. Logistical and practical problems, such as filming and recording in noisy, crowded environments and dealing with inclement weather, were also experienced and addressed through group problem-solving.

The capstone case study of Event WIL was centered around the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games at the Gold Coast in Australia. As with the earlier two iterations of Event WIL, a newsroom space was established close to the main site of the Commonwealth Games that was staffed by students who had already completed an earlier course or either Event WIL or Flipped WIL. Similar to both the G20 and Blues on Broadbeach coverage, each day began with a production meeting with students pitching and discussing stories. Alongside covering stories for the news media, students were also responsible for working with a local news outlet to produce a printed copy of a newspaper that was distributed to the Athletes' Village every two days.

Purpose WIL

The final model of WIL tested through the use of a capstone case study was that of Purpose WIL. Each of the cases describes an authentic WIL experience designed around a specific social issue. The reporting projects described in this model are embedded in both advocacy journalism and strengths-based reporting (Dahmen, 2016; Fisher, 2016). Purpose WIL is distinct from the other models in two specific ways. First, while other projects have established websites to showcase student work, Purpose WIL students engage with the community to critique practices around a social issue and build a body of knowledge around a social issue housed on a permanent website. The website is not just an artifact showcasing student work but also a resource for the community. Second, Purpose WIL allows students to interact, not just with industry but also with various not-for-profit and support organizations, government departments, and individual community members. It is distinct in its degree and spread of engagement. Through this engagement, students have access to interviews and stories they may otherwise not have considered. They critique their practice and broader media practices in relation to reporting about marginalized groups and/or social issues.

The first iteration of Purpose WIL in 2015 was Project Safe Space. The project aimed to educate the community about domestic violence issues and provide a voice for victims while providing journalism students with appropriate training in appropriate reporting practices and a better understanding of domestic violence issues (Valencia-Forrester & Backhaus, 2018). This case study provided not only learning opportunities for students but also significant service to vulnerable communities and their advocates.

The second case study of Purpose WIL focused on Mental Health and Refugees in 2016. This iteration of Purpose WIL was developed in light of media representations of refugees in Australia at the time. Indeed, research reveals that media tends to depict refugees in negative rather than positive stories and rarely afford them voice (Bleiker et al., 2013; Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). Mental Health and Refugees was run at a significantly smaller scale than the other cases of Purpose WIL due to the intensive workload pressures. Students were still trained to produce ethical, responsible reporting around a social issue, but stories were housed as a special feature on the News Production website rather than on a purpose-built site, and the community engagement was not quite as close in this iteration. Overall, while Refugees and Mental Health did engage students in advocacy journalism, the outcomes achieved were modest compared with other iterations of Purpose WIL and other WIL cases. Thus, Mental Health and Refugees could be considered an opportunity for a negative case analysis. Because key elements of the pilot case study, namely the induction and debriefing, were not included and the WIL experience was not as supported as other case studies, this case study provided evidence for "indicating boundaries of the theory's applicability" (Preissle, 2008, p. 15).

The capstone case study of Purpose WIL was 2017's Project Open Doors, which focused on media representations of people with disabilities. Though one in five Australians is living with a disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016), people with a disability are rarely depicted in the mainstream media, and when they are, it is typically in negative ways (Briant et al., 2013; Worrell, 2018). In light of the negative case results from Mental Health and Refugees, there was a renewed focus on the induction, the debrief, a multi-purpose website, and close engagement with community partners. In Project Open Doors, students produced a body of media reporting around disability in partnership with people living with a disability, their families and carers, sector and support organizations, and policymakers in this area. Project Open Doors represented a "return to form" for Purpose WIL, with the project widely considered a success from the perspective of both student journalists and community partners. Such was the community engagement and support for the project that the Australian Discrimination Commissioner at the time came to Brisbane to launch the project and lead a panel discussion at the induction.

Study 2: The Value of Emerging WIL Models Developed Under the Wise Practice Framework

Study Aims and Approaches

This study aimed to explore stakeholders' perceived value of the emerging university-led WIL models developed under the wise practice framework in terms of their impacts on students' career development. To achieve this aim, a phenomenological approach was adopted to understand the lived experience of the impacts among the stakeholders involved in these WIL models. The phenomenology adopted was interpretative (hermeneutic). It is characterized by the stakeholders' direct experience and their making sense of the experience (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Therefore, the stakeholders' experience in this study reflects both the real impacts of the WIL models and their perspectives on the impacts of these models on students' career development.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following the recommendation of Tomaszewski et al. (2020) on phenomenological studies, data in this study were collected by using one-on-one interviews and focus groups. A total of 77 interviews were undertaken, 46 with students, 8 with students participating in the case studies who were now working as journalists, 15 with industry professionals, and 8 with journalism academic staff. Industry participants were all working as journalists at the time of interview, had at least ten years of experience, and were involved in supervising or mentoring new journalists in some capacity. The academic interviewees were all former journalists before transitioning to educating journalism students, with each one having between 10 and 35 years of academic experience. In addition to the interviews, a series of 7 focus groups were conducted after each case iteration, with participants incorporating a critical reflection. Interviews and focus groups were transcribed and imported into qualitative data analysis software NVIVO. Data analysis included achieving familiarity with the data through open-minded reading, searching for meanings and themes, and organizing themes into a meaningful wholeness (Sundler et al., 2019). Three major impacts were identified, as reported below.

Results and Discussion

Building Graduate Attributes

Graduate attributes refer to the desirable skills and knowledge that students develop throughout their studies that consequently impact the contribution that students make as professionals and citizens (Bowden et al., 2000). Participation in the university-led WIL cases resulted in students developing a broader understanding of journalism in society. Following Cohen's (2015a) articulation of journalists as citizens and activists, the WIL cases in the study indicated that students had explored a fuller spectrum of journalism. This outcome predominantly took place through Purpose WIL. The students participating in Project Open Doors also noted the impact of authentic experience. They appreciated the opportunity to write meaningful stories with a social impact and contribute to changing the public conversation about disability. When asked what they gained from Project Open Doors, one student, Sarah, stated:

> Not just a level of this is my achievement, but a level of something higher, something more important to the social role of journalism, that it can play. I think that's a really important part of what this project has done.

The quote suggests that the students have developed an understanding of the importance of the project from different respects. It was not only about the learning outcome for themselves but also the learning outcome that they, as the journalist, will transfer to impact the society in which they are situated. In fact, students appeared to develop attributes making them an agent for social justice and social development after completing the WIL course. For example, many raised their awareness as media producers and consumers in relation to the representation of people with a disability. Ben, another student, elaborated on this contention, using the example of photographing people with a disability in an appropriate manner:

> Carrying out the work itself was invaluable. Even from sourcing my own images, something which I haven't had to do, but I really struggle with that, and I suppose a way to get those images sensitively as well, but yeah. So I was struggling. I can't speak highly enough of it. It's been so great, really great.

While Purpose WIL had an explicit advocacy/citizenship focus, the other models of university-led WIL also aimed to bring together aspects of entrepreneurship with social responsibility and citizenship. A notable example of this was the Event WIL coverage of the Commonwealth Games. Aside from the Games themselves, students also covered issues surrounding the Games such as the StolenWealth Protests over First Peoples land rights. The students' efforts to engage with the StolenWealth Protest Camp were rewarded as the two involved were both named as finalists in the prestigious Australian journalism awards, the Walkley Awards.

Enhancing Employability Assets - evidencing employability

Students saw value in the opportunity to produce published work for their portfolios. A professional portfolio of published work was seen as a key outcome by both students and industry, a finding supported in the literature (Tanner et al., 2012). Several students identified the need to be "published before you finished." They believed that the publishing experience would make them "stand out" from other journalism graduates in a competitive job market. Therefore, participating in each of the wise practice WIL cases, they accumulated these "assets" that can evidence and enhance their employability. This portfolio of work was built up throughout the scaffolded units so that students would graduate with a well-rounded record tailored to contemporary job requirements. It indicates the close linking course outcomes with industry expectations, which helps students to understand and eventually navigate the complex labor market (Bennett, 2019). As part of their participation in the Commonwealth Games Event WIL, students had significant stories published in national news outlets. Students also provided dedicated coverage of the StolenWealth protests producing some of the most important national stories published about the

Games for media partners. Through their portfolio, a number of the graduates from News Production have had success in employment despite the challenging media environment with one named Young New Journalist of the Year at the Queensland Media Awards.

In addition to a portfolio of work, students and former students were also able to develop social networks and contacts. Daniel, a former student who is now working as a journalist, highlighted this as an important outcome of their participation in the capstone case:

> I actually built up my contacts base quite a lot, which has been really good. [I] sort of learnt how to find contacts as well that's been really helpful, cos because I sort of didn't have an idea of where I would even go to look for places to try to contact people. I really enjoyed some of the contacts that I made. I actually kept them and I've been using them now in my current job.

Contacts and networks are important in the world of work. While current students felt the necessity of curating contacts, graduates of journalism programs experienced the importance of this social capital to their job success. Building up these contacts and working alongside industry allowed students to develop familiarity with the industry and learning the "rules of the game" including "industry structure, beliefs, norms, values and culture" (Bridgstock, 2009, p. 38).

Authentic Work Experience

Another benefit of participating in these WIL courses was the accumulation of authentic work experience. For example, in enunciating what dimensions of News Production they found most useful, students typically drew comparisons with the journalism education received by peers they met via internships. They felt advantaged by a journalism education which gave them authentic WIL multimedia experiences scaffolded across several units. Students identified distinct advantages in Flipped WIL News Production model wherein they were required to undertake all professional newsroom roles, including technical roles:

> The way my education compares to other students graduating from other universities is that I've got a lot of practical experience. I know that some universities, it's all about the theoretical, and they're not getting a lot of practical done, so already, I'm a step ahead. I can shoot content. I can produce, edit that content. I know other universities might have more of that production side of it, but they do get help from professionals, whereas a lot of the work we did here at [institution name], we did all that by ourselves.

The above quotation demonstrates the potential for these emerging WIL models to be utilized by a university in a market-driven higher education system to differentiate itself from others (Patrick et al., 2009). Journalism curricula at other tertiary institutions may not focus on this, and the implementation of these WIL models culminates in students' hands-on experience, which suggests that they will contribute immediately once hired in the labor market. This is a particularly important outcome, given that students are increasingly seeking a "pay-off" for their investment in academia (Abeysekera, 2006, p. 7).

As with other WIL models, the authenticity of the experience was paramount for student engagement. Students reported that because they were working on a "real-life project" that wasn't "just for uni [assessment]" and that being published for "the whole world to see and read" was "really important." Another stated that it was "a nerve-wracking experience" having her work published and was "frightening to have people read and judge" her stories but she appreciated that this was the reality of a career in journalism. One Project Open Doors participant, Han, stated that it was rewarding and inspiring to realize that the course was "not just about my own learning experience" but that it had wider societal significance.

Conclusion

Given the critiques of both the hospital and entrepreneurial models of journalism education, and a reducing number of internship opportunities, a wise practice framework was employed to develop an alternative, more inclusive, approach to WIL in journalism education. A university-led WIL model overcomes the limitations of industry placements and ensures all students can equally participate to get necessary work-related experience and enhance their employability. In this study, the cases reflected the development of three models of university-led WIL in journalism that bring academia and industry together in partnership to build the capacity of all student journalists to work in a dynamic media landscape. In evaluating the success of a WIL program, Billett (2001) suggests that there are two key measures of success: the "affordances" or amount of experience that workplace supervisors provide to students and the "engagement," which refers to how much students choose to participate in workplace activities. Each of the three WIL models has been designed to maximize student and industry engagement and has the following core similarities: scope and impact beyond the university setting; the provision of authentic experience; a body of published work as a student outcome; possibilities for replication.

In conclusion, the models described in this chapter incorporate a scaffolded hybrid of the hospital/ entrepreneurship models of university-led WIL that can enhance journalism students' employability. Incorporating a contemporary newsroom model, accessible to all on-campus and online students, ensures all students are afforded the widest possible range of experience to publish timely authentic news and current affairs on a variety of public facing multimedia platforms. Notably, these models not only focus on the technical skills required of journalists but also on the entrepreneurial qualities of initiative and innovation that are important in the contemporary media landscape. Further, students were encouraged to consider the role of journalism in society and journalists as citizens rather than content producers. Addressing these higher-level capacities is important to the future employability of graduates if they are to be prepared, not for the status quo but for a dynamic media landscape. In this respect, the university-led WIL models presented here integrate the best features of the teaching hospital model and the entrepreneurial model, while also extending them through an overt focus on the inclusion of all students and developing their employability.

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Chapter 12
Vietnamese University Students' Motivation and Engagement with Participating in Extracurricular Activities to Develop Employability

Ngoc Tung Vu and Do Na Chi

Abstract Extracurricular activities (ECAs) have been identified as a notable measure to fill students' lack of soft skills for employability when academic competence is still a dominant goal in higher education in Vietnam. However, the levels of students' motivation and engagement in ECAs and the influential factors on their engagement are still questionable. In Vietnam, the traditional sociocultural beliefs remarkably drive Vietnamese people's behaviors, yet little is known about Vietnamese student engagement in ECAs under the impacts of Vietnamese sociocultural values. This quantitative study investigates student engagement in ECAs under cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions with 440 students from various higher education institutions in Vietnam. The findings revealed discrepancies in cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement in ECAs among students of different genders, academic disciplines, and academic years possibly due to the students' beliefs guided by Vietnamese sociocultural values. Implications for higher education institutions are provided to support thge organizing ECAs and encouraging student engagement in ECAs.

Introduction

Graduate employability has become central in higher education in recent years with numerous policies, research, and practices in place (Abas-Mastura et al., 2013; Andrewartha & Harvey, 2017; Harvey, 2000; UNESCO, 2012; World Bank, 2010). However, there is an increase in the number of unemployed or under-employed graduates when employers' hiring decisions largely depend on graduates' work experience and skills in addition to their formal qualifications or academic competence (Enders, 2014; Kearns, 2001; Tymon, 2011). In terms of skills, employers demand not only

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technical skills but also generic skills, also known as soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills that enhance employees to work effectively (Tran, 2019). However, in higher education, it appears that more attention and effort have been paid to develop students' technical skills and academic abilities than soft skills. This has seemingly resulted in a graduate skill gap as employers consistently deem that university graduates fail to effectively undertake assigned tasks at the workplace, although their technical skills are good (e.g., Tran, 2018). Hence, it is crucial for higher education institutions (HEIs) to develop students' soft skills and academic competence (Kearns, 2001; Tran, 2019).

In fact, several HEIs worldwide have paid more attention to improving students' soft skills to enhance their employability (Kearns, 2001). For example, several institutions have been organizing workshops on soft skills and extracurricular activities (ECAs) from their own funds for students, student-led associations, or student-led organizations (Tran, 2017). It is hoped that joining these extracurricular activities will develop students' soft skills (Andrewartha & Harvey, 2017). According to Tchibozo and Pasteur (2007), ECAs are institutional activities mainly led by students' associations and take place in various forms such as voluntary or paid participation in work, short-term and long-term involvement in projects (e.g., sports, community, academic, and professional activities). Joining ECAs positively enhances students' academic experiences and employability skills to meet the workplace demands (Al-Ansari et al., 2016; Lau et al., 2014; Roulin & Bangerter, 2013; Stuart et al., 2011).

In Vietnam, colleges and universities are developing various programs to help students develop both academic competence and soft skills to become well-rounded employees (Harman et al., 2010). Among those programs, extracurricular activities have been used as the primary measure to develop soft skills for their future employability (Tran, 2017, 2018, 2019). However, it appears that many students disregard participating in ECAs (Tran, 2018). Unfortunately, Vietnamese students' motivation and their engagement with these ECAs have not been adequately explored. The lack of studies in this regard may hinder the effectiveness of organizing these ECAs to maximize the benefits for students and of using scarce financial and human resources allocated.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate Vietnamese students' motivations and engagement with developing employability via ECAs in their institutions. This study may shed some light on understanding factors influencing their motivations and engagement. It will help ECAs organizers and HEIs understand students' needs so that appropriate responses can be made. Drawing on the findings, this study will provide practical suggestions for improving the effectiveness of organizing ECAs with regard to enhancing students' future employability.

Literature Review

The Concept of Motivation

Student motivation has been an attractive topic in educational research as it can contribute significantly to learners' academic and non-academic achievements (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Pintrich, 2003). The early 1980s witnessed the increasing body of research that took motivation into greater attention in education and cognitive factors (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). The concern about the significant influences of motivation emerges when there is a contradiction within the same educational setting where some students thrive on learning more than others. The conclusion then refers to the students' motivation that triggers these students' higher energy, involvement, and completion in their learning (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002; Pintrich, 2003). Motivation is a multifaceted construct that is investigated from different standpoints (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002). To comprehensively understand what motivation means and its contributions to students' engagement with ECAs, it is necessary to examine motivation from various researchers' perspectives. This section of the paper investigates the concept of motivation, including (i) the classification of motivation and (ii) different theoretical perspectives in researching motivation.

It is generally accepted that motivation is primarily divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Reiss, 2012). The former refers to individuals taking actions for their own sake, drawing on their interest, curiosity, and enjoyment (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reiss, 2012). An example of this kind of motivation is illustrated by Reiss (2012) that a child plays sports because of his interest rather than the benefits of playing sports. In this sense, what triggers intrinsic motivation is the internal factors developed from individuals' sense of autonomy, relatedness, and belongingness (Reeve, 1996). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation engages individuals in taking actions under the influences of external factors such as their cultural or broader communities. A community may acknowledge or reward high-achieving members. This acknowledgment or reward becomes the motivation for its members to work hard so that they are recognized and respected in the community (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985). In other words, individuals are motivated to do something because that act will benefit them. For example, a child is motivated to play a sport not only because of the interests but also the long-term goal of becoming a sports champion (Reiss, 2012). This goal is the factor that develops the child's motivation and effort to strengthen his/her skills to reach the goal.

The role of extrinsic motivation in many cases is over-praised (Reiss, 2012). To illustrate, there has been a view that intrinsic motivation is undermined by extrinsic motivation in the way that individuals act because they are guided by the expected outcomes of the behaviors (Reiss, 2012). For example, a child tries to produce an exceptional drawing because of the award that he can receive. Later, he continues to draw, which is thought to result from his desire to obtain more awards for drawing in the future. However, Reiss (2012) argues that it is unreliable to claim one's behaviors as an outcome of increasing extrinsic motivation. Reiss (2012) critiques theorists who are extrinsically oriented by pointing out the gap in examining one's behavior-cognition relationship. In his view, those theorists do not sufficiently examine whether extrinsic factors can increase one's intrinsic motivation rather than decreasing it. For example, in the case of the child who keeps drawing, there is no clear evidence of whether his continuous interest in drawing is guided by the future awards or by his newly formed drawing interest. Also, the question of whether the prize for producing such a great drawing, in turn, develops this child's intrinsic motivation for drawing is yet unanswered (Reiss, 2012).

Classifying the two types of motivation and examining their relationship to understand how one is motivated to act is claimed to be invalid (Reiss, 2012). As the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is debatable, it causes uncertainty in understanding what exactly guides an individual's actions. Therefore, we need to answer the question on the relationship between one's motivation and engagement.

Student Engagement

In an educational context, student engagement is becoming an important topic of research since it is enacted as an influential driver of students' general performance at school (Tran, 2019). Kuh (2009) considers engagement as "the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (p. 683). Until now, in higher education settings, various parties have promoted policies and actions to enrich students' academic and non-academic experiences in varying ways, which are all as economically responsive as the current workforce demand. They have the educational goals to enhance the students' knowledge-based strengths, inseparably commensurate with their work-related competence.

Research around the concept of student engagement has been undertaken from different perspectives (Kahu, 2013). Behavioral perspective sees student engagement through their observable behaviors, defining it as "the extent to which students are engaging in activities that higher education research has shown to be linked with high-quality learning outcomes" (Krause & Coates, 2008, p. 493). Sociocultural researchers propose a different perspective by examining students' engagement as "occur[ing] dynamically within an educational interface at the intersection of the student and their characteristics and background, and the institution and its practices" (Kahu & Nelson, 2018, p. 59). However, an individual's behaviors are usually influenced by the sociocultural values they have long been nurtured (Pham & Saltmarsh, 2013). Therefore, an investigation into one's behavioral engagement should not be undertaken in separation from his or her socio-historical backgrounds. In addition, there is a cultural negotiation in one's behaviors when he or she enters a new context with new cultural values. This requires cultural adjustment for appropriate behaviors.

The psychological perspective discusses student engagement in relation to "the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to desired outcomes" (Hu & Kuh, 2002, p. 555). The engagement under this perspective is often investigated under three sub-categories: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Fredricks et al., 2004). According to Fredricks et al. (2004), the cognitive dimension is connected to students' self-regulation together with sufficiency in allowing their in-depth learning strategies. Affective engagement is "feelings and beliefs held by those who are engaged" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 105). In this sense, students' engagement in a task is determined by their interest in the tasks and their sense of belongingness to the community that undertakes the task. When the student engagement is motivated affectively, they can develop their sense of optimism, self-esteem, resilience, and pride (Coulangeon, 2018; Denault & Déry, 2015; Hansen et al., 2003; Stuart et al., 2011) toward academic goals (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). The behavioral engagement under these perspectives moves beyond the observable behaviors to include students' anticipated patience, enthusiasm, effort, and contribution (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Derived from the above analyses according to three schools of thought, we decided to adopt a combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement for use in our study. They are viewed as overlapping and influential on student engagement.

Student Engagement in ECAs

Extracurricular activities (ECAs) are defined as "activities performed by students that fall outside a school or university academic curriculum" (Jamal, 2012, p. 3). ECAs are said to exist in all levels of education and have been central in modern education as a holistic approach to develop students' soft skills (Jamal, 2012).

Lamb et al. (2012) pinpointed that participating in ECAs benefits students differently. Despite being neglected in academic sessions, ECAs can lead to the growth of emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and reasoning, which in turn benefit their academic studies (Stuart et al., 2011; Yanik, 2018). Participation in ECAs also fosters the growth of many soft skills required by employers and beneficial for future career development (Tran, 2017). Besides, as ECAs are part of the school's culture, taking part in these ECAs makes learners proud and enhance their sense of connectedness, position, and identities in the school community. In a positive sense, with much engagement in the school's ECAs, students strengthen their understanding of the school vision and culture, contributing to their satisfaction in educational progress (Anderman, 2002). Finally, participation in ECAs could enhance university graduates' chances to secure employment opportunities because they can use the skills learned from ECAs as a valuable resource to establish selling points with employers (Tran, 2017). Likewise, participating in these activities may broaden their social network and develop resilience and other attributes necessary for their career development upon graduation (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013; Stuart et al., 2011; Tchibozo, 2007).

However, students' participation in ECAs is influenced by a variety of factors. It depends on the availability of information about these activities and overlaps with academic schedules (Tran, 2017). In other words, students' engagement in ECAs relies on how well they can define their educational goals to select relevant ECAs (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). Realistically, it may also be influenced by their beliefs about the importance of these activities compared with academic activities (Tran, 2017, 2018) and their sense of being marginalized in their school community (Balfanz & Legters, 2006).

In Vietnam, ECAs have been used as the primary measure to develop soft skills for students (Tran, 2017, 2018, 2019). These ECAs are primarily hosted by Youth Union's clubs (Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, 2019) or student-led clubs on campus (Tran, 2015). Despite the benefits that ECAs bring to students (Al-Ansari et al., 2016; Roulin & Bangerter, 2013; Tran, 2017), it seems that ECAs have not been fully concerned by Vietnamese students due to the lack of information about these ECAs, unprofessional organizations, and students' tight schedules (Tran, 2017). The students may also decide to join ECAs only for rewards such as self-improvement scores, which are not added to the final academic scores but used in ranking students and granting scholarships (Tran, 2017). Hofer et al. (2010) note that Vietnamese students tend to pay more attention to academic activities, which they think will significantly contribute to their academic achievements. Meanwhile, the educational benefits from joining ECAs are not visible to the students (Hofer et al., 2010). Following Bourdieu (1998) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), the mentioned sociocultural aspects, rules and regulations of the higher education system, and personal or parents' expectations appear to define the characteristics of a *social field* which shapes the way students think and act, or *habitus*, when it comes to their motivation and engagement with developing employability via ECAs. The access to resources, or capital, such as time and money, may also affect their motivation and engagement.

To better support ECAs as the primary measure to develop employability for Vietnamese students in higher education, further research is needed to better understand students' motivations and engagement. Based on the results, better strategies in organizing ECAs and motivating student engagement in these ECAs can be devised and deployed. Those are the drivers behind our study reported in this chapter.

Research Design

This chapter will report on what factors influence Vietnamese students to participate in and how they engage in extracurricular activities in Vietnamese universities. The chapter responds to three following research questions:

- *To what extent are Vietnamese students motivated to participate in ECAs in their institutions?*
- *To what extent do they engage with participating in ECAs?*

A quantitative approach was chosen to find answers to the research questions because it supports the researchers to identify the varying degrees of student motivation of and engagement in ECAs between groups in a certain population, according to genders, years of schooling, and academic disciplines (Creswell, 2009).

Data were collected by means of an online survey. The survey was developed based on the literature review. On top of a section that collected participants' demographic information, the survey has two sections. Section 1 aimed to measure students' motivations to participate in ECAs in their institutions. The motivations were identified through our previous informal interviews with 30 students at one public university. This section asked the participants to rate the extent to which a motivation drove them to partake in ECAs in their institutions on a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 denoted "very little" and 5 meant "very much." The second section aimed to measure students' engagement with participating in ECAs. Fifteen items were written to describe cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement with participating in ECAs. The participants were asked to rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and 5 indicated "strongly agree."

Data collection took place in 2 months (October and November 2019) at three universities in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital city. The online surveys were randomly distributed to some lecturers in three universities based on the researchers' personal connections. The lecturers then assisted in spreading them to their students. All survey respondents were well informed of the purposes of the research and the expected date of completion. The survey indicated that by returning the survey, the participants gave us consent to use the information they provided for the research purpose.

In total, 497 responses were collected. However, we excluded 35 incomplete responses and another 21 responses as outliers per questionnaire statements in relation to student motivation and student engagement, and only 440 responses were used for the analysis in this study. The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 12.1.

Using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, we descriptively analyzed the data in the second section of the survey, with a mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), to find the influence of certain motivations on students' participation

Table 12.1 Participants' information

Classification		Percentage
Gender	Male	56
	Female	44
Type of university	Public	80
	Private	20
Year of study	Year 1	50
	Year 2–3	33.2
	Year 4–5–6	16.8
Discipline	Business and economics	29.2
	Social sciences	23.8
	Science	14.7
	Education	32.3

Table 12.2 Frameworks for interpreting the means

Ranges	Interpretation
1.0–1.8	Very weak
1.8–2.6	Weak
2.6–3.4	Moderate
3.4–4.2	Strong
4.2–5.0	Very strong

in ECAs as the whole group. Data from the third section were analyzed using principal component analysis. Inferential analysis with independent t-tests and one-way ANOVA tests was performed to see how self-rates varied in three distinctive facets of student engagement: cognition, affection, and behavior. The M and SD values were interpreted using the framework in Table 12.2.

Results

Student Motivation to Participate in ECAs

Table 12.3 shows the self-rated intrinsic motivations among 440 students based on a scale of 5 points. The results showed that students' strongest motivation to participate in ECAs in their institutions was to develop soft skills (M = 3.77, SD = 1.08), followed by satisfying their curiosity (M = 3.41, SD = 1.55) and challenging themselves (M = 3.33, SD = 1.13). Other intrinsic motivations that influenced their participation moderately included: connection with people of shared interests and life goals (M = 3.25, SD = 1.15), personal interests (M = 3.23, SD = 1.12), and released stress after study (M = 3.02, SD = 1.18).

Extrinsic motivations were generally less influential on students' participation than intrinsic motivations. The top influential extrinsic motivation for their participation was to improve their job application (M = 3.06, SD = 1.21). It was because, in Vietnam, ECA participation is often interpreted as being disciplined, active, compliant with administrative regulations, or having leadership skills. The driving influences of extrinsic motivations were observed at a moderate level, as shown in Table 12.4.

Table 12.3 Students' intrinsic motivations regarding ECA participation

Intrinsic motivations regarding ECAs	M	SD
I want to improve my soft skills to support my future job application	3.77	1.08
I am curious about extracurricular activities	3.41	1.55
I want to challenge myself through extracurricular activities	3.33	1.13
I want to connect with people of shared interests and life goals	3.25	1.15
I am interested in extracurricular activities	3.23	1.12
I want to relieve stress after school hours	3.02	1.18

Table 12.4 Students' extrinsic motivations regarding ECA participation

Extrinsic motivations regarding ECAs	M	SD
I want to improve my job applications	3.06	1.21
I want to obtain high self-improvement scores	2.96	1.26
I want to show my special talent in addition to my academic performance	2.93	1.17
I want to obtain certificates of ECA participation	2.84	1.28
I want to accompany my friends	2.71	1.18
Teachers encouraged us to participate in ECAs	2.70	1.21
I participate due to the requirement of my institution	2.69	1.39

Student Engagement with ECAs

We analyzed the data of this section of the survey using principal component analysis, with the support of SPSS. The internal consistency regarding this data set appeared high (Cronbach's alpha $\alpha = 0.93$) and correlations between 15 variables ranged from 0.26 to 0.77. Additionally, the KMO test result was 0.94, showing that it was adequate to extract the variables into principal components.

When the principal components analysis was performed, it was used with a fixed three-factor solution using varimax rotation. The results showed that this solution explained a total of 73.453% of the variance. However, items 1 and 6 did not satisfy the criteria that the secondary loading should be at least 0.2 apart from the primary loading (Table 12.5). The same process was done again. Although item 11 had two loadings not 0.2 apart (Table 12.6), the difference was minimal, and the researchers decided to keep item 4. Based on this solution, the internal consistency regarding this data set appeared high (Cronbach's alpha $\alpha = 0.92$), correlations between 13 variables ranged from 0.26 to 0.77, and the KMO test result was 0.93. As a consequence, the scale is finalized as follows:

- Factor 1: Cognitive engagement (4 items, alpha $\alpha = 0.90$, variance explained: 6.54%)
- Factor 2: Affective engagement (4 items, alpha $\alpha = 0.89$, variance explained: 11.57%)
- Factor 3: Behavioral engagement (5 items, alpha $\alpha = 0.86$, variance explained: 56.55%

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

The results (Table 12.7) showed that the mean score of cognitive engagement (M = 3.80) was higher than those of affective (M = 3.44) and behavioral (M = 3.24) engagement. This suggested a gap between students' cognition and their actual behaviors of participating in ECAs.

Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare the engagement between two groups of gender and two main types of the school year. Statistical findings

Table 12.5 Results of exploratory factor analysis (1st attempt)

	1	2	3
Var1	0.555	**0.613**	0.000
Var2	0.226	**0.802**	0.299
Var3	0.157	**0.782**	0.350
Var4	0.197	**0.788**	0.254
Var5	0.186	**0.777**	0.320
Var6	**0.607**	0.351	0.528
Var7	0.431	0.367	**0.683**
Var8	0.312	0.255	**0.817**
Var9	0.138	0.357	**0.790**
Var10	0.395	0.380	**0.603**
Var11	**0.697**	0.115	0.478
Var12	**0.830**	0.000	0.177
Var13	**0.679**	0.289	0.360
Var14	**0.773**	0.267	0.185
Var15	**0.712**	0.362	0.210

Table 12.6 Results of exploratory factor analysis (2nd attempt)

	1	2	3
Var2	0.225	**0.799**	0.291
Var3	0.180	**0.807**	0.305
Var4	0.211	**0.804**	0.215
Var5	0.206	**0.804**	0.267
Var7	0.419	0.378	**0.681**
Var8	0.302	0.269	**0.822**
Var9	0.145	0.377	**0.784**
Var10	0.397	0.392	**0.598**
Var11	**0.692**	0.113	0.495
Var12	**0.712**	0.000	0.173
Var13	**0.715**	0.325	0.307
Var14	**0.796**	0.286	0.149
Var15	**0.833**	0.358	0.210

suggested that self-rates of behavioral engagement with ECAs were significantly different between two groups of gender: $t(438) = 6.55$, $p < 0.05$ (Table 12.8). Similarly, it happened in different types of school, also with regard to behavioral engagement: $t(347) = 2.80$, $p < 0.05$ (Table 12.9).

One-way ANOVA tests were performed to define whether differences of self-rated engagement levels are significantly different in groups of disciplines. The findings suggested that there were statistically significant differences determining behavioral

Table 12.7 Student engagement with ECAs

Components	M	SD
Cognitive engagement	**3.80**	**0.86**
I realize that participating in ECAs improves my soft skills	3.86	0.96
I realize that participating in ECAs helps me expand my social network	3.87	0.98
I realize that participating in ECAs will enhance my employment opportunities	3.68	0.97
I realize that participating in ECAs helps me improve professional work attitudes	3.78	1.01
Affective engagement	**3.44**	**0.93**
I feel happy when participating in ECAs	3.45	1.03
I feel positive to take part in ECAs	3.30	1.02
I enjoy learning new things when engaging with participating in ECAs	3.52	1.12
I feel proud to conduct ECAs that benefit people around	3.50	1.10
Behavioral engagement	**3.24**	**0.94**
I actively participate in all types of ECAs	3.06	1.09
I sometimes take a leading role in ECAs that I am familiar with	2.79	1.26
I put my best efforts to participate in ECAs, regardless of my role	3.48	1.09
I encourage my friends to join in ECAs with me	3.38	1.15
I often reflect on my experience with ECAs to draw lessons for myself	3.47	1.11

Table 12.8 Student engagement with ECAs according to gender

Component	All students ($N = 440$)		Males ($N = 175$)		Females ($N = 265$)	
	M	SD	*M*	SD	M	SD
Cognitive	3.80	0.86	3.77	0.85	3.85	0.87
Affective	3.44	0.93	3.41	0.92	3.49	0.94
Behavioral	3.24	0.94	3.01	0.89	3.58	0.92

Table 12.9 Student engagement with ECAs according to study year

Component	All students ($N = 440$)		Year 1–2–3		Year 4–5–6	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Cognitive	3.80	0.86	3.82	0.86	3.70	0.87
Affective	3.44	0.93	3.45	0.94	3.41	0.85
Behavioral	3.24	0.94	3.28	0.96	2.96	0.80

engagement ($F(2, 437) = 10.52, p < 0.05$) between groups of disciplines, but not with cognitive and affective engagement (Table 12.10). According to a Turkey post hoc test results, there was statistically significant differences in the level of behavioral engagement between groups of STEM and Science students ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.92$)

Table 12.10 Student engagement with ECAs according to discipline

Component	All students ($N = 440$)		Business, Finance, and Economics ($N = 196$)		Social Sciences and Humanities ($N = 136$)		STEM and Science ($N = 108$)	
	M	*SD*	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Cognitive	3.80	0.86	3.84	0.84	3.73	0.87	3.82	0.89
Affective	3.44	0.93	3.45	0.89	3.36	0.97	3.53	0.93
Behavioral	3.24	0.94	3.45	0.94	2.99	0.91	3.16	0.92

and Social Sciences and Humanities counterparts ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.91$) ($p < 0.001$), but it was not a case in the other pairs.

Discussion

The study reported in this chapter attempted to measure students' motivations for and their engagement with participating in ECAs in Vietnamese universities. The study showed that the students were motivated by several motivations to different extents, and there were discrepancies in their cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement. This section will discuss and explain the findings in light of existing literature and sociocultural aspects of Vietnam. This section will also include some implications for advancing ECAs to prepare students for their future employability.

This study showed that students were both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to participate in ECAs despite differences in the influential levels. Reiss (2012) presented the common sense of extrinsic motivation undermining intrinsic one. This study showed a contrasting view in which intrinsic motivation obtained a higher rate (M = 3.34) than extrinsic motivation (M = 2.84). This means that student participation was primarily self-determined when their interests, curiosity, and passion surpassed the external forces of recognition and awards that ECAs could offer. This finding aligned with the idea of autonomous motivation (Welters et al., 2014), indicating that one feels much free to participate in an activity if being intrinsically or autonomously motivated. To some extent, this finding implies that educators and ECA organizers should stimulate students' intrinsic motivations to increase their participation in ECAs. Nevertheless, extrinsic motivation influenced students' motivation to engage in ECAs though at a low level. In Vietnamese educational settings, rewards such as self-improvement scores or meeting scholarship application requirements are important to the students and could drive students' extrinsic motivation (Tran, 2017). Therefore, HEIs could use certificates of recognition, rewards, self-improvement scores, and even regulations to boost students' participation rate on top of students' own intrinsic motivations.

The students were the most engaged cognitively in ECAs. Consistent with Roulin and Bangerter (2013), Stuart et al. (2011), and Tchibozo (2007), and despite its being rated the least among the five surveyed items (M = 3.27), the finding in this study indicated that if students had a high level of awareness of the benefits of ECAs for their academic ability development, they would participate in these activities. HEIs have long held the goal of organizing activities that can advance students' academic and soft-skills achievements (Jamal, 2012; Kuh, 2009). This finding suggested that if HEIs can engage students with ECAs, it could help them realize that goal. Aligned with Tran (2018), this study also suggested that students would engage with ECAs if they realized that ECAs could help develop their soft skills, expand their social network and soft skills, improve professional attitudes, and contribute to elevating their employment prospects.

For affective engagement, this study shared a similar viewpoint with Fredricks et al. (2004), indicating that engagement with ECAs provided students with positive attitudes about themselves and ECAs. Students should understand that joining ECAs is part of their learning process at the institutions. Only when they know that will they engage affectively with ECAs; otherwise, they would disregard, as detected in Tran (2018) and Tran (2015). In addition, while research on student engagement in ECAs tends to devote much attention to the positive feelings when students join ECAs (Fredricks et al., 2004; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002), what this study further offers is the positive emotion when students could benefit others via ECAs. This finding can be explained by Vietnamese culture being collective, highly valuing tolerance, kindness, and community spirit, which Vietnamese students have long been educated in (Nguyen, 2012). Therefore, when students realize the values of ECAs with regard to community development, they feel more affectively engaged.

Although cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement dimensions are regarded as overlapping and supporting one another in student engagement, this study showed a gap between what the students perceived and how they behaved. While students seemed to engage cognitively and affectively, such engagement types were not fully translated into their behavioral engagement. This discrepancy could be attributed to some Vietnamese students' traditional characteristics such as being passive, obedient, and collectivist. Pham and Saltmarsh (2013) found that students' behaviors are influenced by sociocultural features that form part of their characteristics and beliefs. Although a collective culture is appreciated in Vietnam, students regraded formal learning activities more favorably than other forms of learning outside the class (Hofer et al., 2010). Also, many students still believe in the power of high scores; thus, students often spend time and effort achieving as many high scores as possible instead of participating in ECAs. Equally important, contextual factors such as a crowded timetable for their formal learning plus time for working part-time consume much of their time and energy; hence, they would naturally be reluctant to join ECAs as these are classified as "extra" (Tran, 2019).

The study indicated a discrepancy in engagement in ECAs between male and female students. Tran (2019) identified the higher engagement rate in ECAs in male students with an explanation referring to Vietnamese cultural influences. He explained that Vietnamese female students did not engage much with ECAs because their families did not offer them much freedom to join in activities outside their formal learning schedule compared with their male counterparts. This limited engagement of Vietnamese female students can also be explained that Confucian women are expected to play a “passive, submissive and subservient role” in the society (Tsai, 2006, p. 473). Therefore, they are encouraged to focus on their studies and families rather than social and outdoor activities. However, in this study, the data showed a contradiction in which female students were more engaged in ECAs in terms of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. This could be related to social changes in Vietnam and other Confucian societies where gender equality is promoted, and women are more encouraged to take part in social activities (Truong, 2008; Tsai, 2006). This could also be a result of data collection. In Tran’s (2019) study, he collected data mostly in the South of Vietnam, whereas we collected data for this study in Hanoi, the capital city, where people may be more open about women’s social roles compared to other regions of the country.

Another innovation in the study findings is the gap in ECA engagement among students of different academic years. Those in the earlier stages of their university education have a higher level of cognitive and affective engagement but a lower level of behavioral engagement in ECAs compared to their seniors. The difference in ECA engagement in terms of years of study could be explained due to Vietnamese students’ school-leisure conflict (Hofer et al., 2010). Vietnamese students, especially freshmen, tend to prioritize academic activities, which could be a constituent of their long-nurtured goal of academic successes and could be seen via their scores. As a result, Vietnamese freshmen invest more in academic activities for immediate and visible achievements such as better learning results, which their families would expect (Hofer et al., 2010), instead of ECAs, which do not offer such benefits. Hence, echoing Hofer et al. (2010), we recommend that these freshmen should be advised to better “reconcile their studies with their extracurricular life” (p. 247) to better prepare themselves for a life outside the textbook.

Regarding different levels of engagement in ECAs of students across disciplines, STEM and Science students were found to better behaviorally engage in ECAs than their Social Sciences and Humanities peers. Although little research has identified the reasons for this disparity, which needs further exploration, a possible factor that causes such varied engagement may rest on students’ perception about the relevance of the type of ECAs organized to their personal or professional development goals. For example, in a study conducted by You (2018), students were found to prioritize their participation in activities closely related to their professional development. Following that line of empirical evidence, for this study, STEM students’ behavioral engagement was higher than those in Social Sciences because ECAs in their school/college better meet their expectations for personal/professional development. As such, it is recommended that institutions should organize ECAs aligned with students’ needs to increase their engagement and effective use of resources.

The discussion so far has brought about the impact of the *social field* (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), characterized by several sociocultural values and expectations, and educational practices on students’ *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) related to their motivations and engagement with developing employability via ECAs. Their existing habitus, such as their attitudes toward learning, also plays part in shaping their motivation and engagement levels. Their motivation and engagement also varied between groups of students, which appeared to associate with their access to resources, such as support of communities to women in urban areas, as mentioned above. This study suggests that while student motivation and engagement can be directly attributed to their personal and contextual issues, the ingrained causes may be grand, deeply rooted in the characteristics of the context they function and their access to relevant capital for participating in ECAs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study showed that Vietnamese students are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to engage in ECAs, although intrinsic motivation influenced their participation more strongly. When it came to their engagement, despite having a high level of cognitive engagement, their affective and behavioral engagement level was much lower. The study found that students' motivations and engagement were linked to some Vietnamese sociocultural values embedded in the HE system, such as appreciation of scores, disregard of informal learning activities, and the collectivist ideology. Such sociocultural values define the so-called social field (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Together with access to possible resources, it shapes students' way of thinking and behaving, or "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), when it comes to their motivation and engagement with developing employability via ECAs.

This study indicates that even when students have a high level of motivation and cognition for the importance of participating in ECAs, they may not participate in these activities willingly. Therefore, if ECAs are used to enhance students' employability, there should be activities to close the gap between students' cognition/beliefs and actual behaviors. The identified motivations and the extent to which they influence students' participation in ECAs could be used to reorganize ECAs to enhance students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement.

The study has only reported students' motivations and engagement levels separately. Future studies should explore the correlations between these two variables and confounders or moderators. Further qualitative research could also investigate students' experience with ECAs in their institutions to understand their engagement or disengagement better. It is also recommended that both voices of students and the institution representatives be accounted for to identify the (mis)alignment between these two agents' perspectives toward ECAs.

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Part IV
Translating Employability into Employment Outcomes and Career Advancement

Chapter 13

Are You an Outstanding or a Disappointing Job Candidate? Hawaii Recruiters' Perspectives on Demonstrating Employability Skills and Qualities

Hong Ngo, Ariana Eichelberger, and Binh Chi Bui

Abstract What is learned in higher education institutions may not align with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that jobs require. In situations where jobs are shrinking, and more and more graduates are seeking jobs, understanding what employability means to recruiters is critical for students and institutions to enhance students' future employment prospects. To this end, this chapter reports the results of a mixed-methods study on the important skills and qualities for employability from the perspectives of job interviewers in Hawaii, the United States. The study detected key qualities contributing to or detracting from graduates' success in job interviews and being employees. Through these results, students and higher education institutions will be informed to better monitor their employability and meet market needs.

Introduction

Today's innovation-driven, skills-based, and globalized economies are quickly changing the skills needed to find and keep employment (Yorke, 2006). Employers want their employees to maintain their highly skilled status and employability though they tend to change their jobs (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency ([AWPA], 2013). Higher education institutions have therefore recognized the need to incorporate employability skills into curricula for some time (Harvey, 2001; Mason et al., 2009; Tymon, 2011) and have implemented various approaches to provide

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students with various experience to increase employability. These approaches include internships (Freudenberg et al., 2011), international experience (Crossman & Clarke, 2010), structured work experience, and employer involvement in course design and delivery (Mason et al., 2009). The enhancement of employability through educational practices benefits students in terms of better employment outcomes and higher education institutions given the reputation achieved from such employment outcomes. For students, that is individual employability, and for institutions, that is institutional employability (Harvey, 2001).

In the context of the increasing influence of the labor market on employment outcomes that matter to both students and institutions, employability becomes a key factor dictating students' educational choices (Artess et al., 2017). It is accepted as "a key driver and measure of university outcomes" (Clarke, 2018, p. 1924). Despite higher education institutions' efforts, there is still much to learn about the changing, mutually influenced relationship between higher education and labor markets (Tomlinson, 2017). Going hand in hand with the skills mismatch is an increase in education costs, which are compounded by uncertain job prospects after graduation (Clarke, 2018). How to obtain a job and pay off college costs are pressing concerns of students, institutions, and researchers. Research into employability has been primarily conducted in Europe and Australia (Clarke, 2018) but considerably less in the United States (US). The need for conducting a study in the US is therefore considerable because the workplace skills considered important may vary by contexts. Given this context-based perspective, we conducted the present study in Hawaii at a time of a relatively high unemployment rate in the US labor market. The goal of this study was to identify preferences of the Hawaii labor market to inform Hawaii's higher education system and better prepare their students to seize employment opportunities. Its results enriched higher education stakeholders' understanding of employability skills which may be context-bound and subjective. The questions guiding this study were:

1. What skills and qualities do Hawaii recruiters find most important when evaluating the employability of job applicants?
2. What are the pitfalls that Hawaii job seekers should avoid to increase the possibility of succeeding in job interviews?

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Employability

According to Gazier (1998), graduate employability entered debates about 100 years ago. It then emerged as a central theme in labor market policies in Europe and elsewhere in the 1990s (McQuaid et al., 2005; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Employability is a complex and multidimensional term as it can be viewed from the perspective of the employer, the student or graduate, and the higher education institution (Tymon, 2013). Among the definitions of employability, Hillage and Pollard's (1998) definition has become widely accepted (Clarke, 2018). Put simply, it is "being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work," and more comprehensively, "the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labor market to realize potential through sustainable employment" (Hillage & Pollard, 1998, p. 2).

While Hillage and Pollard's (1998) definition of graduate employability is widely accepted, the concept of graduate employability has continued to be reconceptualized. Holmes (2013) provided three competing perspectives on employability that Clarke (2018) termed as human capital, social capital, and individual behaviors, respectively. As such, human capital is a graduate's skills, knowledge, competencies, and work experience. Social capital refers to the impact of social networks, social class, and university ranking on graduates' employment outcomes. Human behaviors signify the process of graduates' transitioning from university to the workforce, requiring graduates to have career self-management and career-building skills.

In conceptualizing employability, human capital is deemed critical (Becker, 2009; Clarke, 2018). However, employability is a complex model (Harvey, 2001). If merely conceptualized as human capital, it does not guarantee positive employment outcomes because employability has an absolute meaning and relative meaning (Brown et al., 2003). Absolute employability is the individual knowledge, skills, and attitudes or their human capital. However, whether a person is employed is relative as it depends on the employers' judgment of the extent to which that person has met the job requirements and many times the employers' preferences, too.

Addressing Harvey's (2001) concern about the complexity of employability, Römgens et al. (2019) indicated two categories of literature on the construct. The first is literature on employability in the domain of higher education. The second is literature on employability in the workplace. The complexity of the employability model (Harvey, 2001) lies in the disconnect between these two categories of literature (Römgens et al., 2019). To better conceptualize employability, Clarke (2018) emphasized a redefinition of employability. She posited that employability should contain the dimensions of human capital, social capital, individual behaviors and attributes, perceptions of being able to gain employment, and labor market variables. Clarke's (2018) redefinition implies that graduates must possess various qualities to competently navigate different career opportunities to obtain a job. Therefore, their employability is multidimensional and context-specific (Clarke, 2018; Fugate et al., 2004; Römgens et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). Recognizing these two natures of employability may assist researchers in clarifying the employability construct.

According to Harvey (2001), employability is the responsibility of both students and institutions. For institutional employability, employment outcomes of graduates partly determine higher education institutions rankings. Individual student employability may be influenced by job types, time to get a job, attributes of recruitment, further learning, and employability skills. Employability is increasingly considered the responsibility of individuals (Ball, 2009; Brown et al., 2003; Clarke, 2018), yet research shows that graduates are not ready for work due to a lack of employability skills (Tymon, 2011).

Employability Skills

Skills, knowledge, attitudes, and personal attributes are conceptually different. However, these qualities are often subsumed in the world of work into what is called "skills" (Clarke, 2018). According to Suleman (2018), "skills" is a competence concept, and "skills" and "competencies" are used interchangeably. Both skills and competencies are categorized into the specific (or field-specific/vocational) type and the generic (or universal/general) type (Cimatti, 2016; Heijke et al., 2003; Stuart, as cited in Markus et al., 2005). While the specific type refers to the skills and knowledge (human capital) needed to perform in a specific job (Andrews & Higson, 2008), the generic type refers to the skills applicable to different job tasks, employment sectors, and personal life. Owing to the important and context-free characteristics of the generic skills, they are sometimes referred to as core or transferable skills (Gilbert et al., 2004). In employability research, they are also referred to as soft skills or employability skills although employability skills may be either specific skills signaled by educational credentials or soft skills or both (Singh & Singh, 2017).

For employability skills, researchers and organizations have documented skills most valued in the labor market. Using the US Department of Labor's Occupational Network (O*NET) database for 536 occupations, Burrus et al. (2013) identified the 10 most important skills: dependability, attention to details, integrity, cooperation, initiative, self-control, stress tolerance, analytical thinking, adaptability/flexibility, and persistence. A study of 175 companies across the Czech Republic, Latvia, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom (UK) by Lapiņa and Ščeulovs (2014) indicated four important domains and attributes, including communication skills, human relations and interpersonal skills, research and planning skills, and leadership as well as management skills, experience, responsibility, and desire to learn and work. Hart Research Associates (2015) in a survey of 400 US employers found that prioritized skills are communication, teamwork, decision-making, critical thinking, and applying knowledge. Jonck and Minaar (2015), validating an employability measuring instrument with 509 employers in South Africa, found that interpersonal skills were deemed most important. In testing the applicability of a skill survey with 193 employers in Greece, Tsitskari et al. (2017) indicated that professional behavior and development, leadership and influence, problem-solving, organization and time management, and (inter)personal and communication skills were the most valued.

Other researchers have reviewed results from previous employability skills studies. Osmani et al. (2015) conducted a review of 39 studies on employability and found five skills were most mentioned as important graduate attributes—communication, teamwork, problem-solving, technological, and creativity. Sisodia and Agarwal (2017) reviewed 25 papers and reported nine employability skills needed in medical services: communication, information communication and technology, work psychology, teamwork, interpersonal, critical thinking and problem-solving, self-management, planning and organizing, and conceptual and analytical skills. According to Sisodia and Agarwal (2017), these skills are relevant to all service providers. In his book, *Building soft skills for employability: Challenges and practices in Vietnam*, Tran (2020) summarized employability skills thought to be most important. These include basic skills (literacy, numeracy, using technology), people-related skills (communication interpersonal, teamwork, customer-service skills), conceptual/thinking skills (collecting and organizing information, problem-solving, planning and organizing, learning-to-learn, critical thinking, creativity), personal skills and attributes (responsibility, resourcefulness, flexibility, self-esteem, management), business skills (innovation, enterprise), and community skills and knowledge.

Albeit studying employability skills, researchers (e.g., Lapiņa & Ščeulovs, 2014; Saunders & Zuzel, 2010; Tran, 2020) also included other qualities. For example, Saunders and Zuzel (2010) conducted a study on important employability skills and qualities, with 29 employers, 16 graduates, and 17 students in biomolecular sciences. They identified 36 skills and qualities categorized into three domains: personal qualities, core skills, and subject knowledge. They found that adaptability, cooperation, work ethic, attention to detail, integrity, self-awareness, enthusiasm, punctuality, tolerance to stress, and initiative were the most valued for personal qualities. The most valued core skills were written communication, ICT, interpersonal, numeracy, and team working skills. For subject knowledge, four aspects were assessed to be important by respondents: understanding concepts, breadth of knowledge, application of knowledge, and being up-to-date. Since employability also depends on specialized skills and knowledge, as well as other attributes, referring only to soft skills as employability skills reflects the popular generic skill-focused approach to understanding employability.

Despite several studies that have attempted to identify relevant employability skills, these skills lists are not exhaustive and appear to diverge from each other to some extent. This could be attributed to contextual differences between studies such as work environments, participants, and study time. Therefore, relevant skills for employability need to be re-examined regularly so that higher education curricula and students can develop employability skills to meet current labor market demand.

Conceptual Framework

Tomlinson's (2017) employability capital model was employed to guide the conceptualizations of the skills and attributes in this study (Table 13.1). The model is based upon the works of researchers such as Becker (1964), Bourdieu (1986), and others (e.g., Giddens, 1991; Seligman, 1998). In this framework, the skill items were classified into five overlapping, interconnected, and fluid forms of capital: human capital, social capital, cultural capital, identity capital, and psychological capital. Human capital is represented by hard skills (specialized and technical skills) and career-building skills, enhancing job performance by applying these hard skills. Social capital refers to networks and acquaintances as well as related activities, raising graduates' awareness and access to opportunities and tacit knowledge of

Table 13.1 Forms of employability capital and survey items

Employability capital	Survey items
Human capital	Self-representing well at interviews, ability to meet deadlines, critical thinking skills, well-prepared job applications, ability to set priorities, having a growth mindset, planning, and organizing, ability to demonstrate breadth and application of discipline knowledge, sharp analytical skills, relevant academic qualifications, ICT knowledge, pre-graduation experience
Social capital	Interpersonal and communication skills, ability to establish rapport with others, ability to understand the needs of others, being a team player, ability to relate well with supervisors
Cultural capital	Ability to demonstrate an awareness and sensitivity to different cultural contexts
Identity capital	Integrity and punctuality, ability to appraise own strengths and areas for development, self-confidence, leadership where necessary, self-concepts (e.g., who he/she is as a person)
Psychological capital	Tolerance to stress in the workplace, ability to manage workplace stress effectively, ability to manage setbacks and changes as well as transitions, ability to tackle unfamiliar problems, ability to maintain positive attitudes and a high energy level, flexibility, and adaptability

jobs. Cultural capital is skills and knowledge, dispositions (e.g., perceptions, behaviors, styles), distinction, and symbolic values, allowing graduates to better behave and adapt to organizations and different working contexts. Identity capital is related to students'/graduates' aspiration to become part of an occupational sector. It acts as a compass to drive behavior in developing employability skills. It also reflects a personal investment in understanding labor market needs and working toward achieving those needs. Psychological capital can be seen in graduates' resilience, self-efficacy, and ability to withstand setbacks, challenges, and pressures in employment with flexibility.

Employing Tomlinson's (2017) capital model to develop the survey instrument, we also conceptualized the Hawaii labor market as the social field (Bourdieu, 2020). The social field has its own practices, rules, regulations, and preferences, and habitus is ways of thinking, beliefs, interpretations, expectations, and actions one takes to function within the social field. When the social field changes, in response, recruiters and higher education institutions should also respond in a way that they and their institutions survive and thrive within the social field. With that conceptualization, this study aimed to identify the skills and attributes Hawaii recruiters value and inform Hawaii higher education stakeholders, as to what their graduates need to be better prepared for the Hawaii labor market. Beyond that, its findings enhanced their insights into the contextualization and subjectivity of employability skills and qualities.

The Present Study

Study Context

Graduate employability in the US has become a major concern in recent years. In a survey of 2,000 US companies, two-thirds of the companies reported a mismatch between the qualifications they required and those that students possessed (Manyika et al., 2011). Two-thirds of US companies also reported that graduates lacked the employability skills they required (Manyika et al., 2011), and only 16% of managers thought graduates could meet their skill requirements (Cimatti, 2016). Another survey of 400 private, non-profit organizations by Hart Research Associates (2015) found US graduates lacking preparedness in the various areas that the organizations deemed important for workplace success. Employers said that they paid more attention to developing generic skills (Hart Research Associates, 2015). However, the situation has not appeared to improve since the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (USBLS, 2020a) reported that the unemployment rate in September of 2020 hovered around 8%.

Hawaii is a unique state of the US, consisting of a group of geographically dispersed islands in the Pacific Ocean. Hawaii has a population of 1.416 million people, an overall economy valued at $95–97 billion, and the median resident income is $80,384 per year (Forbes, 2019; US Bureau of Economic Analysis [USBEA], 2020). Similar to other states, it was heavily impacted by the 2020 pandemic. From March to July of 2020, the state's unemployment rate rose to 18.5%, which translated to a 165,000 non-agriculture job loss (Hawaii Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism [HDBEDT], 2020). The unemployment rate improved in August 2020 but remained at 12.5% (Hawaii Department of Labor and Industrial Relations [HDLIR], 2020). This rate was much higher than the national average (8.4%) in the same period (USBLS, 2020b). Its only public University system, the University of Hawaii System, serves the entire state. Approximately 5,000 students graduated in 2020 (Ordonio, 2020) and many of them joined the group of 30,000 graduates seeking jobs (the authors' calculation based upon relevant statistics). This put further pressure on the state's labor market conditions, reducing the need for skilled labor, and increasing the skills required of new recruits.

Research Methods

In this study, we used a mixed-methods approach to collect and analyze data. Mixing quantitative and qualitative methods deepens the understanding of data (Mertens, 2005) as the quantitative method deals with statistical data, and the qualitative method contains detailed description that makes the statistics better fit their human context (Trochim, 2006).

Because the study aimed to understand recruiters' perspectives in assessing job applicants, it targeted job interviewers. After receiving approval from the University of Hawaii's Institutional Review Board for the data collection on human subjects, 50 recruiters were invited to participate in the study. The response rate was 54% (27 participants), of which 18 participants (66.7%) were female, and 9 (33.3%) were male. Each participant had served on a minimum of two hiring committees for higher education institutions in Hawaii. Ten were in teaching positions (five full professors, three assistant professors, one lecturer, and one instructor); six were in leadership or administrative positions (two directors and four managers); the remaining were two librarians, two instructional designers, two educational technology developers, two institutional support staff members, one information technologist, one curriculum specialist, and one educational technologist. Seven of them had more than 20 years of experience; nine had 11 to 15 years of experience; six had six to ten years of experience; the remaining had less than five years of experience. In addition, they varied in the number of hiring committees on which they had served. Seven (25.9%) had served on six to ten committees; 12 (44.5%) had served on more than ten committees; six (22.2%) had served on three to five committees; two (7.4%) had been on fewer than three committees.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through an anonymous online survey. The survey instrument was administered via Google Forms and included two multiple-choice questions, 29 Likert-type questions, and seven open-ended questions. The multiple-choice questions were concerned with the gender of the respondents and the years of serving on hiring committees. As Table 13.2 shows, the 29 questions were developed and adopted from four sources mentioned in the literature section (i.e., Jonck & Minnaar, 2015; Osmani et al., 2015; Saunders & Zuel, 2010; Tsitskari et al., 2017).

The quantitative questions required respondents to rank applicant qualities they deemed highly important, moderately important, low important, or not important. A score for each of these rankings was given. The highly important ranking was given a score of 3, the moderately important ranking a score of 2, the low important ranking a score of 1, and the not important a score of 0. Scores for each item were summed and averaged.

After ranking the items, respondents were to answer seven open-ended questions. These questions were concerned with their professional title, their years of experience, the qualities not listed in the survey that they thought were important for applicants to have, to recall errors applicants had made in applying and interviewing for jobs, and to describe the most outstanding and the most disappointing applicants they had interviewed. To analyze these data, Saldana's (2009) first and second coding cycles were used to look for patterns and themes. The researchers jointly developed a codebook to guide the coding process. Coded data were organized based upon their relationship to the study's research questions, and two themes were derived.

Results

Employability Skills

Table 13.2 displays the rankings of 29 graduate qualities according to their scores. The quantitative data analysis showed a minimum score of 1.81, first quartile = 2.30, a median score of 2.59, third quartile = 2.74, and a maximum score of 2.96. The top 25% of the data were associated with self-representing at interviews (HumC), ability to meet deadlines (HumC), flexibility and adaptability (PsyC), interpersonal and communication skills (SocC), integrity and punctuality (IdenC), ability to establish a good rapport with others (SocC), and critical thinking skills (HumC). These skills and qualities fell into four types of capital in Tomlinson's (2017) model. The most frequent were human capital (HumC), social capital (SocC), psychological capital (PsyC), and identity capital (IdenC).

The bottom 25% of the data in Table 13.2 show the lowest scores for leadership where necessary (IdenC), tolerance to stress in the workplace (PsyC), self-confidence (IdenC), ICT knowledge (HumC), relevant academic qualifications (HumC), pre-graduation experience (HumC), and self-concepts (e.g., who he/she is as a person) (IdenC). The skills and qualities fell into three forms of capital: human capital, psychological capital, and identity capital. The most frequent were human capital, followed by identity capital, and psychological capital.

Based upon the first quartile and the third quartile, the interquartile was 0.44, covering 50% of the data. The skills and qualities that fell into this range were the ability to maintain positive attitudes and a high energy level (PsyC), ability to understand the needs of others (SocC), being a team player (SocC), ability to set priorities (HumC), having a growth mindset (HumC), well-prepared job application (HumC), planning and organizing (HumC), ability to tackle unfamiliar problems (PsyC), ability to manage setbacks and changes as well as transitions (PsyC), having sharp analytical skills (HumC), ability to relate well with supervisors (SocC), ability to manage workplace stress effectively (PsyC), ability to appraise own strengths and areas for development (IdenC), ability to demonstrate an awareness and sensitivity to different cultural contexts (CultC), and ability to demonstrate breadth and application of discipline knowledge (HumC). These skills and qualities fell into at least one form of capital, with human capital as the most frequent and identity as the least frequent.

The human capital was operationalized into more skills than any other forms of capital, as Table 13.2 shows. However, they were distributed fairly evenly across the quartiles. The capital that had the second largest number of operationalized skills was psychological capital, and its importance scores behaved similarly. In this survey, the cultural capital was operationalized into only one skill (i.e., ability to demonstrate an awareness and sensitivity to different cultural contexts), and it was in the central 50% of the data distribution. Noticeable was the skills associated with social capital, which appeared in the top 25% and the interquartile data but were absent in the bottom 25% of the data. By contrast, identity capital skills appeared less in the top quartile than in the bottom quartile.

Table 13.2 Employability qualities and rankings

No.	Items	Capital	Importance score
1	Self-representing well at interviews	HumC	2.96
2	Ability to meet deadlines	HumC	2.88
3	Flexibility and adaptability	PsyC	2.85
4	Interpersonal and communication skills	SocC	2.85
5	Integrity and punctuality	IdenC	2.78
6	Ability to establish good rapport with others	SocC	2.74
7	Critical thinking skills	HumC	2.74
8	Ability to maintain positive attitudes and a high energy level	PsyC	2.74
9	Ability to understand the needs of others	SocC	2.74
10	Being a team player	SocC	2.70
11	Ability to set priorities	HumC	2.70
12	Having a growth mindset	HumC	2.63
13	Well-prepared job application	HumC	2.59
14	Planning and organizing	HumC	2.59
15	Ability to tackle unfamiliar problems	PsyC	2.59
16	Ability to manage setbacks and changes as well as transitions	PsyC	2.52
17	Having sharp analytical skills	HumC	2.52
18	Ability to relate well with supervisors	SocC	2.48
19	Ability to manage workplace stress effectively	PsyC	2.44
20	Ability to appraise own strengths and areas for development	IdenC	2.44
21	Ability to demonstrate an awareness and sensitivity to different cultural contexts	CultC	2.44
22	Ability to demonstrate breadth and application of discipline knowledge	HumC	2.41
23	Leadership where necessary	IdenC	2.18
24	Tolerance to stress in the workplace	PsyC	2.18
25	Self-confidence	IdenC	2.11
26	ICT knowledge	HumC	2.04
27	Relevant academic qualifications	HumC	2.00
28	Pre-graduation experience	HumC	1.85
29	Self-concepts (e.g., who he/she is as a person)	IdenC	1.81

Note HumC = Human Capital, SocC = Social Capital, PsyC = Psychological Capital, CultC = Cultural Capital, IdenC = Identity Capital

Qualitative Results

Based on qualitative data analysis, the participants (P) most frequently cited willingness to learn and personality traits that make job applicants "fit within the team" as desirable qualities. With regard to the ability to learn new skills:

> …we looked for applicants who were not hesitant to learn new skills. For example, they may not have a specific technology skill or know a certain platform; however, if they make it clear they are not intimidated by their lack of knowledge and are confident that they could learn the required skills, we saw this as a positive. (P3)

For candidates' personalities, the recruiters cared most about whether a candidate was well-liked among their peers in previous jobs. "You can teach or train all the skills needed, but you cannot teach people skills" (P21). These "people skills" were most often cited in terms of "need to fit in with the team" (Participant 24). With reference to people skills, even if a job applicant did not have all the skills needed, participants indicated that they still had a better chance to be hired if they indicated that "he is trainable and seems like he could be a good fit for the team" (P21). Qualitative data analysis of participants' descriptions of desirable and undesirable interviewee qualities led to two categories of job applicants: the most outstanding and the most disappointing.

The Most Outstanding Job Applicant

When describing the most outstanding job applicants they had interviewed, the participants' descriptions fell into three categories: qualifications, self-presentation, and preparedness. For the first category, many participants believed that outstanding candidates were the ones that matched well with the job's requirements. An applicant would be recommended as outstanding if "I walk away from the interview believing that this person could "hit the ground running" and would begin adding value to our department immediately" (P12). For the second category, how a candidate presented themselves to the interview committee contributed greatly to interviewers' perceptions of them as outstanding. According to their descriptions, qualities of outstanding candidates were well-spoken, concise, calm, relaxed, and personable. Multiple participants also cited confidence as a quality of outstanding candidates but frequently emphasized that a candidate should be "confident but not arrogant" (P11) and "not overconfident and demonstrate a sense of humor" (P12). Outstanding candidates were also described as well-prepared. Participants felt applicants should have a thorough understanding of the job requirements and should be able to "answer every question with concrete examples from past experience" (P3). Outstanding candidates were those who had researched the organization and its staff before coming to the interview and were able to "ask great follow-up questions to show that they have really investigated and thought about the applied job" (P6).

The Most Disappointing Job Applicant

Participants also described the most disappointing job applicants they had interviewed and detailed the mistakes these applicants had made. Mistakes included lack of preparation, inappropriate dress, lack of confidence, over-confidence or arrogance, and lack of passion. These mistakes occurred anywhere from the application stage to the interview. Although participants felt that it was hard to find an applicant who made no mistakes, it was also hard for the interviewers to recommend applicants with mistakes because mistakes were felt to be a reflection of the attitude of applicants akin. It was like, "I am not really interested in this position" (P2).

The most disappointing applicants also failed to make connections between their experience and job requirements. For example, applicants "fail to explicitly address in their CV, the cover letter, or the interview how they meet the minimum and desired qualifications" (P19). Participants felt that sometimes, applicants seemed to expect "the reviewer to dig through a long-winded letter and resume to find out whether they fit the qualifications" (P10). Although interviewers often revisit the connection between applicants' experience and the job requirements, they felt that the most disappointing applicants were not clear or concise in answering questions about these connections at their interviews. One participant explained that applicants' "answers were rambling and hard to follow. Related to interviewees' answers, it was obvious the applicant was making up responses to the interview questions on the spot" (P12). They also described applicants that gave "vague answers to interview questions, [and] did not cite specific examples of experience" (P14). "The applicant obviously had not thought about the position or why he/she was applying for it" (P12). Sometimes, applicants use generic responses such as "Yes" or "Not at all." "These responses explain why they do interview after interview without success" (P6).

Discussion

The study reported in this chapter identified skills and qualities that Hawaii recruiters valued in job applicants. While each quality described by the recruiters fell in at least one of Tomlinson's (2017) capital categories, the qualities ranked in the survey showed other noticeable trends. They reflected the influence of the interaction between the recruiters' habitus and the labor market as the social field (Bourdieu, 1977, 2020).

First, although the recruiters most often emphasized the qualities in the human and social capital categories, they considered other qualities less important. For example, leadership (IdenC) had a rating of 2.18 on a scale of 3. This finding contrasted with Lapiņa and Ščeulovs (2014) and Tsitskari et al. (2017), who reported leadership as an important quality. Likewise, although considered to be important in other aspects, human capital in terms of ICT had a rating of 2.08. This was surprising in the era of information technology and contrary to results in several previous studies such as

Osmani et al. (2015), Saunders and Zuzel (2010), and Sisodia and Agarwal (2017). Also considered to be less important were pre-graduation experience (HumC) and self-concept (IdenC), which received a score of 1.85 and 1.81, respectively. These results were also somewhat surprising as many would assume that graduates need experience upon entering the labor market or a sense of self-image because they do not want to be jobless (McArdle et al., 2007). They pointed out that Hawaii recruiters' requirements differed from those in the aforementioned studies and other contexts.

Second, pre-graduation experience had a rating of 1.85 in the survey, which qualitatively showed that not all the recruiters were interested in applicants' connecting their experience with the requirements of a job. To understand more about this low score, we re-analyzed the quantitative data and found that 14 of the 27 recruiters rated this quality as highly important or moderately important, and the rest rated it as low important or unimportant. With that being said, there was still a majority of recruiters who considered previous experience important. These results align with findings from previous studies (e.g., Branine, 2008; Crebert et al., 2004; Freudenberg et al., 2011; Griffeth et al., 2005; Lapiņa & Ščeulovs, 2014; Mason et al., 2009). Branine (2008) found that over 60% of graduates were identified as less employable without work experience. Mason et al. (2009) found that experience, such as that from structured work while in college, had positive effects on applicants' employability within six months of graduation. As for the low rating by the minority of the Hawaii recruiters, the reasons might be the generality of the survey item, many types of previous experience to value or ignore, and the potential of some types of experience for long-term professional development. The Hawaii recruiters' requirements were not only different from those in other studies but also different among themselves.

Third, the results pointed to the importance of consistency among observable qualities that the recruiters expect. These observable qualities, such as interpersonal and communication skills, can easily impress interviewers and were considered to be essential employability qualities in previous studies (e.g., Archer & Davison, 2008; Cumming, 2010; Osmani et al., 2015; Sisodia & Agarwal, 2017; Tsitskari et al., 2017). They are interconnected with other observable qualities and create impact in interviews. For example, interpersonal and communication skills are necessarily demonstrated with the use of ingratiation techniques such as maintaining eye contact (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002) and smiling and nodding (Tsai et al., 2005). However, these observable qualities need to be accompanied with, for example, professional appearance and dress. Manner of dress conveys information to the viewer regarding competence, power, and intelligence (Damhorst, 1990), professionalism (Leonard, 2001), and passion (Nwankwo, 2014). Candidates perceived as inappropriately dressed are more likely to fail in interviews (Hendrie, 2017). Thus, although observable qualities may positively co-impact interview success, their co-impact will be negative if recruiters consider them as inconsistent.

Fourth, the results showed that the recruiters also attempted to check on graduates' unobservable skills. Unlike the observable skills, unobservable ones are challenging to assess and are often not in the applicants' favor. In this study, the unobservable skills mentioned by participants were applicants' ability to meet deadlines and ability to set priorities, flexibility, and adaptability, to name a few. If an applicant is able to meet a deadline, for example, it is assumed they have organizational and time management skills, which are highly valued by employers (Tsitskari et al., 2017) and are especially important in the smooth functioning of work teams (Gevers et al., 2006; Waller et al., 2002). However, unlike self-confidence and arrogance, the ability to meet deadlines is not easily observed. For this reason, recruiters may set up different strategies to assess this quality. For example, they may assign a certain activity to the applicant, limit the time to respond, and observe their performance. This technique is common in banking industry interviews, where applicants are often required to take performance tests (Butcher, 2016). However, because the assessment does not lead to real job performance, it may just reflect the recruiters' viewpoints and put some applicants at a disadvantage.

The results also indicated that the recruiters paid attention to whether applicants made mistakes, and particularly, whether they failed to demonstrate how they fitted in with the job. These negative qualities signaled that the applicants were well-prepared for the interview. Given that there are often many applications for one position, being unprepared can easily lead to rejection. In fact, up to 73% of job recruiters report unpreparedness as a top reason for rejecting a candidate (Hendrie, 2017). Sometimes, the assessment of an applicant may be completed within the first 20s (Prickett et al., 2000). That means that applicants might negate all their positive qualities within a short period of time and fail to secure the job due to creating the impression that they are unprepared.

The results also reflected Hawaii recruiters' ways of thinking, and their interpretations of, and expectations for employability qualities. As mentioned in the conceptual framework, the recruiters function within the Hawaii context as a social field. Because of the influence from the social field, they recruit those they think will help their organizations to survive and thrive in that social field. This in turn affects the employability of graduates because their employability relates to the hiring actions of the recruiters. There are two implications for students and their higher education institutions predicted on the recruiters' habitus. On the one hand, to navigate the labor market successfully, students and their universities and colleges have an interrelated role in preparing to meet the recruiters' requirements. On the other hand, because the recruiters' requirements result from their habitus, the requirements are context-based and reflect subjective viewpoints. When labor market conditions change quickly, recruiters' requirements will respond accordingly but of course, in a subjective way. For this reason, students and their institutions should prepare to not only meet recruiters' current requirements but also pro-actively change their preparation in order to stay relevant.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Because the sample was selected in one state, the study results may not be generalized to other employment sectors or US regions. In future studies, researchers can select their sample from more states for more representative data about the preferences of the current US job market. From the outset, the study did not aim at investigating how efficiently job applicants demonstrate the observable and unobservable qualities to employers and how they impact employers' hiring decisions. Future research can be conducted on these topics to bring graduates closer to recruiters' preferences. Some recruiters rated the pre-graduation experience as low important and unimportant. Possible reasons for these responses should become the ground for hypothesis-testing research. Just as important, the researchers in this study only interpreted why pre-graduation experience received low rankings. Future studies can collect more specific evidence on how previous work experience statistically predicts employment outcomes.

Conclusion

Employability is multifaceted and contextual, as observed by Clarke (2018), Fugate et al. (2004), Römgens et al. (2019), and Tomlinson (2017). This study was conducted in one context, higher education institutions in Hawaii, where the employment-related figures had been concerning. While the unemployment rate is still high, recruiters have surely required more of graduates and not less. This study showed that recruiters expected graduates to have discipline-related knowledge and skills as well as the more amorphous soft skills such as the ability to self-represent well at interviews, meet deadlines, be flexible and adaptable, and effectively use interpersonal and communication skills. The study also highlighted the qualities that describe the most outstanding and the most disappointing applicants. Given these results, this study provided students and higher education institutions significant insights into the meaning of and what is important in employability. Its results highlighted the need for students to prepare and demonstrate the qualities preferred by recruiters. Perhaps most importantly, the results reflected that employability skills might be a context-bound and subjective concept, and one which may change over time. This concept should be explored regularly and widely to afford market relevance for students' preparation and higher education training courses.

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Chapter 14
Translating Employability Capital into Employment Outcomes and Career Development: South African Teachers' and Principals' Views

Sikhulile Bonginkosi Msezane

Abstract This chapter explores the translation of employability into employment outcomes and career development in South Africa's teaching industry, using the perspectives of currently employed teachers and employers. Thirteen interviews with principals revealed that employers made hiring decisions based on graduates' teaching qualifications and experience, hard and soft skills, and other qualities. Besides, 15 interviews with currently employed teachers indicated that they succeeded in securing the job by demonstrating their employability through their subject-area strengths, student and classroom skills, non-discipline skills, and personal attributes. In these teachers' and employers' views, employed teachers can sustain their employability in the teaching job market through skills development, lifelong learning, teamwork, technological competence, and work ethics. This chapter also discusses the findings and provides some implications for better translating employability into employment outcomes.

Introduction

In South Africa, the youth graduate unemployment rate is increasing yearly. In 2019, the unemployment rate for those between the ages of 15 and 24 stood at 55.2% (Stats SA, 2019). For college graduates in this age range, the rate was 31%, but still a substantial increase from 19.5% in 2018. Almost four in every ten young people in the labor force do not have a job in South Africa. The absolute number was 20.4 million, accounting for 39.6% of the population (Stats SA, 2019). These figures show that more needs to be done to curb the unemployment rate in this country.

According to Parks-Yancy and Cooley (2018), students need to understand what employers want from prospective employees and how employers screen applicants for desired employee behaviors. Unfortunately, several graduates simply believe

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that having a university or college degree will improve their career prospects (Parks-Yancy & Cooley, 2018). Even when graduates possess some employability skills and attributes, there seems to be a disconnection between possessed employability qualities and employment outcomes (e.g., see Cranmer, 2006; Mason et al., 2009). This disconnect may be due to graduates' inability to demonstrate these qualities to meet different employers' preferences. Likewise, being employed is only the first step in career development; employees need to demonstrate their employability throughout so that they can sustain their employment status and thrive in their careers. Thus, there is a need to identify the factors that employers value in making hiring decisions, with a focus on each occupational sector because each may have different beliefs and practices in their recruitment process. Also, understanding the determinants that sustain employability is important for employed graduates to build a successful career.

To partly tackle the mentioned issues, this chapter will report a study about the qualities that employers look for from teaching job applicants to make their hiring decisions, how teachers should demonstrate their employability, and how they sustain their employability. The research questions are:

1. *What do employers consider when making decisions to hire teachers?*
2. *How can teacher employability be demonstrated from teachers' perspectives?*
3. *How should teachers sustain their employability upon receiving the job offer?*

The study contributes to strengthening the link between employability, employment outcomes, and career development. Particularly, it will shed light on employability issues in the South African context, which may differ from others around the world.

Literature Review

Employability and Sustaining Employability

Employability is a notion that captures the contemporary economic and political era (Brown et al., 2003). Hillage and Pollard (1998) refer to employability as the skills, knowledge, and attributes that graduates have acquired in higher education and are expected to be able to demonstrate. Yorke (2006) further emphasizes the role of employability, defining employability as the skill set and attributes that increase the chances of obtaining employment. Defining employability also depends on graduates' self-evaluation of their capabilities and their wish to pursue a specific career. Veld et al. (2015) refer to this as perceived employability that is linked to proactive behaviors like flexibility and adaptability. They are all necessary for graduates to succeed in obtaining employment. Because obtaining employment is a component of employability (Hillage & Pollard, 1998), defining employability also depends on the supply and demand factors in the labor market. These two key drivers of employability are increasingly considered given that recent massification of higher education has resulted in an oversupply of graduates in many disciplines (Clarke, 2018;

Tomlinson, 2012). Thus, employability situates on the interface between personal factors and external factors. While personal factors can be controlled on part of graduates, external factors cannot. For this reason, there have been interests in how external factors process graduate employability, especially how employers select candidates.

Research shows that employers shortlisted job applicants based on their perceptions, value judgments, idiosyncratic assessments, teacher quality, and organizational culture (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Schein, 2004; Walsh & Tracy, 2004). A large research volume also indicates that employers make their hiring decisions based on an applicant's qualifications and job, environment, and group fit (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Ryan & Schmit, 1996; Turban et al., 2001). It is noted that employers' shortlisting preferences and hiring decision determinants appear to vary across cultures and disciplines. For example, in Asian countries (e.g., China, Taiwan, Vietnam, etc.), degrees may have more weight in employers' decision-making than that in the West (Marginson, 2011). Employability also depends on employers' needs and preferences (Brown et al., 2003; Suleman, 2018). For example, in our technology-driven societies now, graduates of science and technology-related disciplines appear to have a better chance to be employed than those in other social sciences and humanities (OECD, 2017).

Research also suggests that after obtaining employment, graduates need to maintain their employment status and thrive in their careers. This is to deal with the frequent changes in the labor market requirements (Suleman, 2018). To do so, they should continually develop skills and qualities such as lifelong learning, problem-solving, decision-making, and interactive skills (Coetzee et al., 2015). With these qualities, graduates develop their career adaptability, thereby effectively regulating themselves, becoming professionally resilient, and further building their employability (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017).

Employability for the Teaching Profession

Depending on the educational levels, teachers may need to have different skills and attributes to be employable. For example, while becoming a primary teacher requires communication skills, patience, physical stamina, and resourcefulness (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020), becoming a college teacher needs to have problem-solving skills, enthusiasm and motivation, willingness to learn, learning skills, IT usage, teamwork, intelligence, foreign languages, ability to apply knowledge, and interpersonal skills (König & Ribarić, 2019). The required qualities also depend on educational contexts and subject areas. For example, while resourcefulness is a requirement for primary teachers in the United States (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020), primary teachers in Vietnam are required to have suitable ideology to the Communist regime (Nguyen et al., 2007). Or while important qualities of foreign language teachers might be linguistic ability and content knowledge as well as assessment knowledge, important qualities for math teachers are the ability to link students' experience to math concepts, engaging students in the learning and exploring process, going from simple to complex, relating to real-life situations, and technological use (Stols et al., 2015).

Entering the teaching job industry, the changes in the school environment might present different change tasks to teachers. Parallel to that is the obsoletion of some qualities that teachers possess, which put the teachers at a disadvantage in addressing these tasks. Therefore, they need to have professional development to make the school changes meaningful (Bui, 2013) while sustaining their employability and developing their career. An exemplar professional development practice is the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) that the US Department of Education used in 2006 to integrate professional development into teacher evaluation to improve American teachers' teaching quality (DeMonte, 2013). This program, comprising 19 indicators of a good teacher, is used to guide teacher evaluation and assist them in areas they need to refine to improve teaching quality. Research shows that professional development helps teachers refine and further their professional qualities and thus make teaching progress (DeMonte, 2013) and attain job advancement (Donitsa-Schmidt & Zuzovsky, 2020; Wong, 2009).

The Conceptual Framework

Taking the perspective that teachers employability depends on education contexts, I conceptualized the employability qualities (skills and attributes) in this study through the capital concept by Tomlinson (2017). In this conceptual framework, employability qualities are capital that graduates have accumulated and kept developing during the process of operating in the teaching job industry. There are five kinds of capital in Tomlinson's (2017) model: human capital, social capital, cultural capital, psychology capital, and identity capital.

Human capital, i.e., the knowledge and skills that graduates have acquired, is important in the labor market (Clarke, 2018; Tomlinson, 2017). Human capital includes both specialized or technical knowledge and skills plus soft skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork (Clarke, 2018; Tomlinson, 2017). Social capital is the social relationships and networks that help mobilize graduates' existing human capital, bringing them closer to the labor market and its structures, e.g., giving them job offers or information (Tomlinson, 2017). Social capital is associated with the social class, university attended, or any social memberships one has (Holmes, 2013; Tomlinson, 2017). Cultural capital is related to individual cultural understanding and behaviors (Brown et al., 2003; Tomlinson, 2017). Individual behaviors help prepare for future work challenges and ensure graduates' successful career outcomes. Psychological capital includes personal attributes that help graduates navigate the labor market and resiliently fight for their careers (Tomlinson, 2017). Clarke (2018) contends that personality attributes remain stable throughout one's life; thus, individuals should develop adaptability, flexibility, and resilience in their search for employment and career development. Finally, career identity defines

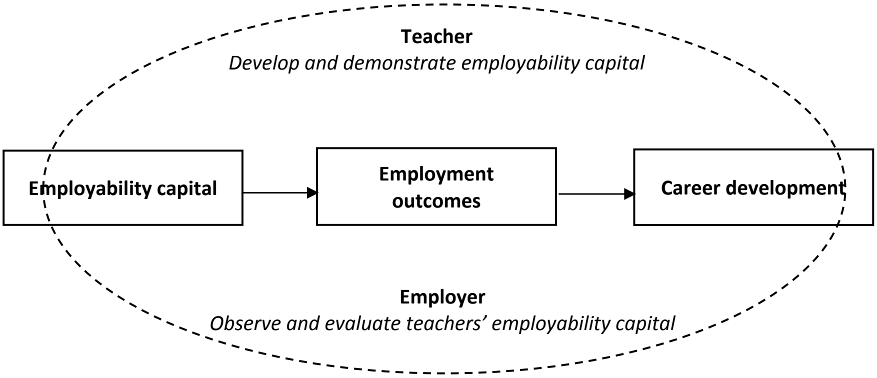
Teacher
Develop and demonstrate employability capital
Employability capital
Employment outcomes
Career development
Employer
Observe and evaluate teachers' employability capital

Fig. 14.1 Translating employability capital to employment outcomes and career development

whom students and graduates want to be. It acts as a compass to orient students and graduates to develop other forms of employability capital and relate them with others in the same profession (Tomlinson, 2017).

As Fig. 14.1 indicates, with the forms of capital accumulated, teachers have to demonstrate them for jobs, and employers have to observe and evaluate them for hiring decisions. If the demonstration matches the preferences of the employers (Roth & Sotomayor, 1990), candidates can get a job as their relative position in the teaching job market is preferred. When change occurs, employees need to further develop their capital using different approaches such as engaging with lifelong learning or via participating in teacher professional development practices. Whether they can maintain and develop their career partly depends on the continued observation and evaluation of their employers of these teachers' capital. Thus, in this conceptual framework to anchor the present study, the employability of teachers is conceptualized as a lifelong professional development concept rather than a definitive set of qualities at a specific time.

The Present Study

Context of the Study

Like many countries, South African graduates struggle to find suitable, degree-relevant work (Sangonet, 2016). Only four out of every ten adults have jobs compared to the global norm of about six in ten (Sangonet, 2016). According to Graham and Mlatsheni (2015), one of the challenges facing young people in South Africa is unemployment because of strong demands for skilled employees. Long-term unemployment and negative labor market experiences lead to decreased self-esteem, depression, and discouragement, which negatively affects the likelihood of an employer hiring employees (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). The teaching profession is one of the major sectors that provides job opportunities for most South African graduates. The requirements for a teaching job in South Africa require an applicant to possess a tertiary qualification. In the past five years, the country has seen high unemployment among teaching graduates. Many are employed temporarily and become unemployed after this temporary contract.

Given the high levels of unemployment in the teaching profession in South Africa, understanding employability and valued teacher qualities from the employer and teacher candidates' perspectives can be instructive. The literature review demonstrates that understanding teacher qualities is important to researchers, teachers, and students. In the South African context, there have been some studies in this regard (e.g., see Stols et al., 2015), but they focus on teachers' perspective rather than employers. To abridge this gap, the study reported in this chapter investigated employers' perspectives on teacher employability while also trying to understand graduates' perspectives on demonstrating and sustaining their own employability.

Research Design

A qualitative design was employed to collecting data and answering the research questions from the perspectives of both employers and teachers. The qualitative design was chosen because it highlights the human context (Mertens, 2005) and describes how human beings experience a certain phenomenon such as being employed and how skills equipment of prospective employees takes place. According to Richards (2005), it allows the researcher to delve into the perceptions, understandings, and feelings of those who have experienced or lived in the situation of research interest.

Participants and Data Collection

This study used the purposeful sampling technique, a qualitative sampling strategy for "selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 182). The study included 13 principals and 15 teachers at 13 selected schools in the province of Mpumalanga, South Africa. To ensure confidentiality, we refer the participants as teachers or principals, followed by a number. The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 14.1.

I used in-depth interviews to collect data for this study. While the results are not generalizable, in-depth interviews include open-ended questions to provide a complete picture of teacher employability from each participant's perspective (Guion et al., 2011). Each interview was conducted either face to face or over the telephone for 30 mins. The principals were asked about factors influencing their hiring decisions and decisions of keeping the employment status for an employed teacher. At the other end of the scale, the teachers were asked about how they demonstrated their

Table 14.1 Participants' demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Work experience (years)	Level of education
Employers				
Principal 1	55	Male	25	Honors degree
Principal 2	58	Female	32	Diploma
Principal 3	37	Male	12	Bachelor's degree
Principal 4	44	Male	14	Bachelor's degree
Principal 5	39	Female	14	Bachelor's degree
Principal 6	41	Male	11	Honors degree
Principal 7	52	Male	20	Diploma
Principal 8	46	Female	17	Bachelor's degree
Principal 9	49	Female	22	Diploma
Principal 10	51	Male	26	Bachelor's degree
Principal 11	53	Male	15	Bachelor's degree
Principal 12	44	Female	19	Bachelor's degree
Principal 13	45	Female	22	Bachelor's degree
Employees				
Teacher 1	26	Male	2	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 2	24	Female	1	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 3	28	Female	4	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 4	24	Female	1	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 5	38	Female	7	Postgraduate diploma
Teacher 6	25	Male	1	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 7	24	Female	1	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 8	32	Male	4	Diploma
Teacher 9	26	Male	1	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 10	25	Female	1	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 11	26	Male	2	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 12	34	Female	9	Honors degree
Teacher 13	27	Female	1	Honors degree
Teacher 14	28	Male	3	Bachelor's degree
Teacher 15	27	Female	1	Bachelor's degree

employability skills to employers to successfully secure the job, and how they can sustain their employment status once employed.

Data Analysis

Based on the conceptual framework, the responses to the participants in the study were analyzed to unravel how stakeholders (i.e., employers and teachers) in the South African teaching industry view which forms of employability capital are the determinants of employment and career development success. It also means that forms of employability capital are contextualized in the South African teaching industry. With this conceptualization in mind, I focused the data analysis on the following categories asked in the research questions: (1) factors that influence the South African employers' hiring decisions, (2) teachers' demonstration of employability capital, and (3) sustaining teacher employability. A thematic analysis was conducted for each of the categories through the steps developed by Castleberry and Nolen (2018). First, the interviews were transcribed. Second, complete thoughts in the interviews were coded openly. Third, themes for each data category were identified. As shown in the findings section, there were four themes for the first and the second data categories and five themes for the last data category. Fourth, the themes were interpreted. Finally, a conclusion was drawn to answer the research questions.

Findings

Factors Influencing Hiring Decisions

Table 14.2 illustrates that employers' decisions to hire a candidate are mostly influenced by the candidate's qualities and characteristics such as teaching qualifications and experiences, hard and soft skills, potential to grow in the teaching profession, positivity and creativity, and social media presence.

Teaching Qualifications and Experience

Hiring decisions follow the shortlisting of candidates. For this initial step, eight out of the thirteen employers (principals) in this study reported that teaching qualifications were fundamental.

> As a selection committee in the school, we employ teachers who possess the necessary qualifications. I believe that teachers must enroll for the necessary qualifications. For instance, in teaching mathematics, teachers must be fully qualified with a mathematics diploma, not the one in science. (Principal 2)

As shown in the narration above, relevant teaching qualifications influenced employers' decision to employ a teacher in their school, and relevant teaching experience increased the chance that the candidate was appointed to a post. The findings show that some candidates applied for teaching posts in order to secure employment

Table 14.2 Factors influencing hiring decisions

Qualities and characteristics	Indicators
Teaching qualifications and experiences	Specific qualification, adequate qualification, relevant experience, a record of accomplishment
Hard skills	Computer literacy, content knowledge, teaching efficacy, research capacity
Soft skills	Dealing with people, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, being a team player, leadership
Other qualities	
Potential to grow in the career	Professional development, insightfulness, motivated to participate in extra-curricular activities
A positive attitude and creativity	Enthusiastic, unselfishness, creativity, showing improvement and development
Persistence	Strong determination, bouncing back from adversity
Social media presence	Using Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp

even if they did not qualify for a particular post because it was not their area of expertise. Therefore, screening for appropriate qualifications is the first step in the recruitment process, and the quality or level of qualification affected their hiring decision.

Teaching experience is key to their hiring decision. The principals postulated that experience is important in the teaching profession. Higher education institutions in South Africa offer teaching qualifications that include teaching practice where students can gain valuable practical experience while they are still students. The principals indicated that these types of experiences do not equip prospective candidates with adequate tools to teach. Therefore, in their view, candidates with actual teaching experience will be favored.

> Yes, teaching experience is vital for the school governing body to decide on whether to hire or not to hire a teacher. I am of the opinion that teachers with more experience tend to perform better in the classroom initially than teachers with less experience. I am also mindful of the fact that when graduates have gained the required experience, they also perform better, but that needs a lot of time and patience as a principal. (Principal 10)

Hard Skills

Hard skills are learned abilities that are acquired and enhanced through practice, repetition, and education (Kagan, 2020). The principals noted that hard skills essentially influenced their decision-making when selecting appropriate candidates for the job. One of these hard skills that they look for the most was the candidates' relevant subject content knowledge and skills. It is because, without these, their qualifications and teaching experience are skeptical.

> Recently I employed a teacher to teach Natural Sciences, one of the main requirements in the interviews was that the teacher has broader knowledge and understanding of what really needs to be taught in the classroom. So, one of our main interview questions was based on the candidate's knowledge of some of the four strands in natural sciences such as Life and Living, Matter and Material, and Planet Earth and beyond. (Principal 6)

In addition, in this era of information and communication technology, computer literacy is necessary in the principals' view. They revealed that technology knowledge was important to handle work, so the candidate should possess at least skills in word-processing, spreadsheets, and smartboards. In their perspectives, in this 4.0 industrial revolution, it is insensible to hire a teacher without computer knowledge and skills (Principal 4).

Another important hard skill was the ability to conduct research. The principals argued that the inability to conduct research independently would be detrimental to candidates' ability to teach learners effectively. They believed that teachers should be able to keep abreast of the ever-changing demands of the modern world by using their research skills.

> We are living in an ever-changing society, and our kids at schools should be very much exposed to new trends and improved technology that is shaping their future. I believe that a teacher with the necessary research qualities and have the ambition to perform research to keep herself/himself abreast with the changing world has a good chance of being employed. (Principal 12)

Soft Skills

Soft skills are desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge. They may be interpersonal skills, personality traits, and those that are not dependent on discipline-specific skills (Kenton, 2020). In this study, the principals indicated that soft skills, such as good listening and communication skills, were essential in influencing their hiring decision.

> In our teaching profession, I am of the view that in the classroom, teachers have to show that they possess a good command of the language of teaching and learning that the content needs in order to be delivered in the classroom and is easily absorbed by the students in the classroom. (Principal 2)

The principals in this study also commented that a candidate should show that he/she was a team player and able to coordinate activities for learners in the classroom. Apart from being a team player, employers perceived that candidates should possess the required work ethic, which should be demonstrated during the interview and while the candidate was employed in a temporary capacity or during the probation period.

> During the interviews, we emphasize the need for teachers to fully participate in school activities. I even ask candidates what sporting activities they are interested in and how they will assist students and other colleagues during sports times. I even pose questions on how he/she can facilitate collaboration amongst other colleagues when doing class activities. (Principal 8)

The principals further mentioned those leadership qualities were an added advantage for job applicants to have to be able to succeed in the job market. Graduates who exhibit good leadership qualities during interviews were likely to be offered the job. The leadership qualities may not be restricted to the teaching areas but also expand to extra-curricular activities or managerial matters, as suggested by Principal 7.

Other Attributes

Potential to grow in the teaching profession. In the study, the principals contended that the potential to grow in the field is one of the factors they would consider when hiring a teacher. A candidate should show a willingness to engage in professional development courses while employed, which should improve the content knowledge of the subject taught. The ideal candidate was the one who had insight into how the school's results could be improved, and he/she should be able to motivate learners to improve their academic achievement. Also, the candidate who showed that he/she was willing to participate in the extra-curricular activities would have a good chance of being given the job. Furthermore, the candidate must show that he/she was willing to assist in extra-curricular activities such as music, soccer, and athletics competitions.

> Asking candidates their future plans will tell us as a selection committee that this candidate is willing to learn and the potential for growth is there to be seen. This showed that the teacher would be able to grow in the field of specialization. (Principal 13)

A positive attitude and creativity. Some principals indicated that their ideal candidate was the one who was enthusiastic and happy throughout the interview process. They mentioned that being motivated and unselfish were positive attitudes that could influence positive hiring outcomes. The principals believed that candidates should show during the interview that their performance would improve in the workplace. As they further stated, one of the factors that influenced their hiring decision was candidates' creativity in demonstrating how they would approach their duties when offered the teaching job and how they would deal with learners with special needs.

Persistence. The employers also recognized perseverance and determination as qualities that candidates should possess. Candidates showing signs that they could bounce back from adversity were also likely to be considered.

Social media presence. The principals were using social media platforms to further scrutinize candidates for a job. They mentioned that candidates should ensure that they updated their social media presence by using appropriate and up-to-date public profiles on Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram.

> When scrutinizing candidates for employment, I also go and find out from the activities of the candidates on social media if the candidate will be able to uphold the values and ethics of the teaching profession and also of the school. (Principal 4)

Demonstrating Employability Skills and Other Attributes

The teachers reported that they had demonstrated their employability skills through their subject-area strengths, student and classroom skills, non-discipline skills, and personality traits. The interviews revealed four groups of qualities and characteristics that they had shown to enhance their chances of getting hired: subject-area knowledge/skills, student and classroom skills, non-discipline skills, and other personal traits (Table 14.3).

Subject-Area Knowledge

All the interviewed teachers expressed the need to be knowledgeable about subject content. They indicated that it was important for candidates to demonstrate their profound knowledge of the subject during the interview as it was a key component that influenced employers' hiring decisions.

> You cannot attend an interview without knowing the subject content. I mean, it is important that you know as much as possible what is the content of the subjects that you intend to teach because some of the questions that will be asked during the interviews are based on content knowledge, and it is embarrassing when you fail to answer questions that have to do with the content of the subjects. (Teacher 11)

Table 14.3 Employability skills and attributes

Skills and attributes	Indicators
Subject-area knowledge/skills	• Subject-specific knowledge • Being able to teach different subjects
Student and classroom skills	• Communication language • Analytically identifying learners' needs • Creating an effective learning environment • Flexibility in using teaching methods • Problem-solving
Non-discipline skills	• Interpersonal skills: communication, collaboration • IT skills: PowerPoint, Smartboards, etc • Leadership skills
Personal attributes	• Enthusiasm • Being hard-working • Patience and dedication • Being open-minded • Result-orientation

The teachers posited that their educational background influenced the employers' decision, as did showing employers that they had the ability to deal with adverse situations in the school environment. Demonstrating these specific qualities during one's probation was essential in securing a permanent appointment in the education sector. Ten out of the 15 teachers also indicated that showing employers that they were flexible to teach other subjects could be to their advantage. For example, Teacher 8 believed that having specialized in three major subjects, life sciences, physics, and mathematics, influenced employers' decision to hire him. Some teachers also pointed out that specific knowledge and abilities were important, but it needed to be complemented by broad knowledge to make the job applicants more employable.

Student and the Classroom Competencies

The teachers also explained that it was important for candidates to demonstrate that they had good proficiency in the language of communication with students. Teacher candidates should be knowledgeable about the learners' development and able to identify learners' needs in the classroom. For this reason, when applying for a Mathematics teaching job, Teacher 3 mentioned that it was important to demonstrate the necessary analytical skills in addressing students' needs. Similarly, Teacher 9 resonated that in the interview, candidates should "show [their] ability to manage students with diverse needs" because it is what employers are after. They believed that those with such an ability tend to integrate different teaching methods in the lesson to bolster students' learning outcomes.

Also important was having skill in addressing different incidents happening within the classroom walls, believing that employers sought problem-solving skills. For example, a teacher discussed how her demonstration of problem-solving skills contributed to her success in securing the teaching position as below:

> I got the teaching job because I convinced the selection panel that I am a problem-solver, and I am the appropriate candidate to manage my class in an acceptable way. (Teacher 4)

Therefore, showing one's abilities to meet students' learning needs and to manage the class effectively are key for a successful job application and interview process in these teachers' perspectives.

Non-discipline Skills

Interpersonal skills. Eleven out of the fifteen teachers mentioned the importance of showing good communication skills when demonstrating to employers how much they needed the job. Most of these graduates believed that showing their employers that they would not have a problem collaborating with other employees proved to be an advantage during interviews. Other teachers also conceded that having qualities that contributed to improving and advancing the team was to their advantage. For example, Teacher 7 believed that it was her effort to show the interview committee that she would be able to work effectively with other teachers who helped her beat other candidates and receive the job offer.

IT skills. Another attribute to demonstrate, which resonates with the employers' expectations in this study, was information technology (IT) skills. One of the teachers mentioned that the candidate's résumé should demonstrate that he/she has IT skills. According to Teacher 7, mentioning the use of PowerPoint and Smartboards during their lessons could be effectively persuasive to employers. It should be noted that in South Africa, most of the schools are located in rural areas where the use of technology is still low. However, this innovative way to impress potential employers gave candidates an advantage over their competitors.

Leadership skills. Some teachers suggested that to secure employment, they demonstrated that they had good leadership experience during their interviews by, for instance, mentioning their participation in several programs at higher education institutions. Some of the leadership roles that the teachers mentioned during their interviews were related to the student representative council, community crime prevention units, environment awareness campaigns, and so forth. They mentioned that these leadership skills positively influenced employers to hire them.

> I think what made the committee select me was that I mentioned my involvement with a student organization at tertiary. I told them that I was a member of the student body at the university, and we were able to make informed decisions when dealing with students' problems and that we were also able to negotiate with the university management of what students' needs are. (Teacher 10)

Personal Attributes

Apart from possessing leadership potential, teachers pointed out that showing enthusiasm for teaching during interviews was one catalyst that enabled them to get the job. When sitting for an interview, one has to be prepared and enthusiastic as this will make the individual candidate stand out. Furthermore, they mentioned that graduates should demonstrate that they were hard-working and dedicated to their work. These personality traits should not only be demonstrated during interviews, but they should also be demonstrated during the initial stages of employment. The teachers mentioned that displaying patience and dedication enhanced teacher's chances of being employed in the education sector:

> As a teacher, you need to be well prepared for these interviews, and showing that you are dedicated to your work, or prospective work will enhance your chances of being employed. (Teacher 9)

Patience was necessary for working with learners, especially those with special needs. The teachers mentioned that this attribute should be practically demonstrated, even in the beginning stages of employment. They recognized that when not tenured and even after completing the probation period, teachers should always demonstrate these two qualities in their work. The teachers also drew attention to the need for candidates to show employers that they were open to multiple points of view, as this was an indicator of someone who could work in a team or with experienced teachers during the mentorship. A candidate should also be result-oriented, indicating the ability to help learners progress to the next grade.

Sustaining Teacher Employability

Professional Development

Once teachers are offered a teaching position, their employability can be sustained by continuously developing their professional expertise through on-the-job training, mentorship programs, and reskilling. Such professional development activities can "empower" and "ensure that they as teachers strive in performing their work in schools" (Principal 7). Some teachers also indicated that professional development importantly increases their motivation, job satisfaction, and work ethics. Employers in this study also mentioned that skills development would assist employed teachers with the capacity to adapt to new technology and thrive in the fourth industrial revolution era.

Lifelong Learning Skills

In order to sustain employability in the teaching job market, teachers maintained that lifelong learning is at the center of their working needs. In their view, lifelong learning ensures that graduates improve their self-confidence and their ability to perform work-related duties with ease. Lifelong learning also helps them keep their minds sharp when they perform their day-to-day duties and increase the chances of teachers being promoted. Many principals also shared the same perspectives as teachers. This was best summarized by Principal 1 mentioning that once employed, teachers must keep on learning new teaching methods and techniques and are willing to acquire new skills and information.

Teamwork-Related Skills

Teachers reported that they had sustained their employability in the teaching job market by refining their teamwork ability, which is important in blending individual teachers' different strengths to improve productivity. Teamwork also assisted them in building trust among themselves and fostering conflict resolution skills. As teachers constantly interacted with each other, they had to find resolutions to disagreements.

Teamwork also required that they collaborated and respected others, so it ensured that they learned from experienced teachers and, thus, increased their productivity. Principals also frequently suggested teamwork skills as one indicator of effective teachers that they would prolong the work contract. Many of them linked teachers' productivity with their ability to improve the pass rate of learners.

Technological Skills

The principals in this study believed that teachers should move with the trends and ensure that they embraced technology in their daily duties at work. In their perspective, engagement with technology when teaching ensured access to information efficiently and speedily. Principal 4 emphasized that even leaders participated in "refresher courses to empower our [IT] skills in order to ensure that the school functions," so he expected that his teaching staff members, being young and new, should also improve their technological skills and utilize these in the class.

Work Ethics

Work ethics were reported as one aspect to sustain teachers' employability in different ways. The principals tend to complain about misbehaviors that teachers committed in the school setting. For example, the principals observed that teachers spent much of their time on social networks or chatted with friends while in front of the learners in the classroom. The principals suggested that teachers behave professionally in the classroom, always arrive punctually, and have a good record of achievement to sustain their employability. A principal explained why it is important to display work ethics as below:

> All teachers need to exhibit good ethical behavior inside and outside school premises. Late coming is a sign of non-compliance and lack of good ethical behavior. Students always copy bad behavior seen from their own teachers. So, teachers need to be always exemplary. (Principal 10)

In addition, these principals believed that hard-working was one of the important attributes that new teachers should demonstrate in the workplace. Teachers also shared the same view about the influence of being hard-working on their possibility of extending work contract. Teachers also considered loyalty to the employers an important aspect of work ethics.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study reported in this chapter identified the job applicants' qualities that employers often examine to make the hiring decisions, how teacher candidates' employability skills should be demonstrated and how they can sustain their employability upon receiving the job offer. Thirteen principals revealed that they made hiring decisions based on graduates' teaching qualifications and experience, hard and soft skills, and other qualities. Fifteen currently employed teachers revealed that they succeeded in securing the job by demonstrating their employability through their subject-area strengths, student and classroom skills, non-discipline skills, and personal attributes. In these teachers' and employers' views, employed teachers can sustain their employability in the teaching job market through skills development, lifelong learning, teamwork, technological competence, and work ethics. This section will discuss the findings and provide some implications for better translating employability into employment outcomes and develop their teaching career.

To enter the teaching profession, graduates need to have obtained relevant qualifications and experience. These are prerequisites to employers' hiring decisions. After the qualifications and experience will come the consideration of candidates' hard skills, soft skills, and other qualities. These findings are consistent with findings in other contexts. For example, Seth and Seth (2013) found that hard skills only explained 20% of students' chance to achieve in their career while soft skills explain the rest. Hard skills appear to be important when graduates transitioned into and functioned in the early stage of their career, but the role of soft skills became more important in the later stage. One important finding of the present study is that the principals valorized graduates' social media presence. This is aligned with Parks-Yancy and Cooley's (2018) observation that recruiting agencies are increasingly turning to non-traditional methods such as the internet or social media to screen candidates. Being present on social media is related to the technological competence (i.e., computer literacy; being present on social media; IT skills) that the principals also sought after.

The study indicated that possessing the knowledge, skills, experience, and qualities necessary for the teaching profession was not enough for teachers to obtain employment. They also needed to effectively demonstrate these qualities to their employers. Most previous studies rarely mentioned this very important aspect of employability. Probably, for this reason, researchers (e.g., Cranmer, 2006; Mason et al., 2009) have found that there is no evidence on the direct impact of the skills learned in university on employment outcomes. In this study, it appeared that there was a gap between what employers wanted to see in teacher candidates and what they demonstrated. Compared to what employers sought, the interviewed teachers seemed to focus much on demonstrating their hard skills (e.g., content knowledge and skills, teaching methods, class management, etc.) and some soft skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, leadership). They did not mention in the interview about demonstrating qualifications and teaching experience; however, it could be assumed that they had done this as they were invited to an interview and successfully secured the employment position. What was missing in their demonstration was their endurance in the teaching job, being one of the most devoting professions, ability to grow in future as well as their social media presence. It could be these missing links that fail to help qualified graduates to translate their possessed employability to employment outcomes, not just in the teaching industry in South Africa now but also in other industries in other contexts. As such, on top of preparing students to be job-ready, institutions could teach them how to demonstrate their job-readiness.

Once hired, teachers could also sustain their employability through professional development, lifelong learning, teamwork, technology, and work ethics. Among these themes, lifelong learning is probably the most associated with professional development given the different modes through which professional development activities can be conducted (Abukari, 2005; DeMonte, 2013). Although teamwork-related skills, technological skills, and work ethics were also important, lifelong learning skills ensured that teachers continually learned to develop different kinds of employability capital. The development of necessary capital enables them to effectively address professional tasks, adapt to professional change, and ultimately achieve a successful career. Their perspectives actually reflect other scholars' perspective that employability is not static but processual or lifelong (Holmes, 2013; Tran et al., 2020). The finding suggests that employability programs offered at higher education institutions should be defined more broadly, preparing students for a lifetime instead of helping them to be successful in the recruitment process.

Although there might be differences in the quality focus between the employers and teachers in the study, the findings suggested that both the principals and teachers focused more intensively on human capital issues (qualifications, IT skills, etc.) than other forms of capital. They suggested that besides subject expertise, technological competence was very important for teachers. This requirement appears less emphasized in other countries. The requirements of primary teachers in the United States can be a good example (see US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Less emphasis does not mean that employers do not require the ICT gray matter of teachers. In a study with 70 employers in America, Asia, and Europe, Garrido et al. (2012) explained that when the ICT gray matter is common among applicants, recruiters will divert their focus to other qualities. The technological emphasis in this study could be explained by the fact that because the schools in the province of Mpumalanga, like most others in South Africa, operate in rural areas, they are experiencing some technology gap. Therefore, they try to hire technologically competent teachers to innovate their education system. Such a difference in skills demand across labor markets and through time has been detected by other authors such Clarke (2018) and Suleman (2018).

This study reveals the necessary qualities that teacher candidates need to possess and develop to get hired and sustain their employability for career success in the South African context. This study significantly contributes to closing the gap of how to translate employability skills into employment outcomes as well as utilize these skills to maintain employment status. In South Africa, this is even more significant because unemployment is currently too high compared to any other national contexts. While there is not much mobility in this labor market due to unemployment (Stats SA, 2019), understanding how to sustain employability should also receive adequate attention so that graduates can lead their profession successfully. However, this study has not focused on the effectiveness of strategies in demonstrating employability qualities to secure a job and maintain employment status in that job. It is recommended that future studies should investigate how to best signal employability capital to employers, with some statistical analysis to determine the effectiveness of each way. That will provide useful implications for employability programs in South African higher education.

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Chapter 15
The Journey to Securing Full-Time Employment in the Host Country: The Case of International Graduates of Australian Universities

Vi Truong and Tran Le Huu Nghia

Abstract This chapter reports a qualitative study on the contributors to the success of 16 international graduates of Australian universities in securing full-time employment in Australia after graduation. Tomlinson (2017) employability capital framework was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. This research shows that five employability capitals (human capital, social capital, cultural capital, psychological capital, identity capital) suggested by (Tomlinson, 2017) were closely correlated and collectively contributed to participants' employment outcomes. The results indicate that job seekers' ability to demonstrate such types of employability capital to employers is vital for successful job applications. This chapter discusses some implications for Australian universities and international students regarding enhancing the latter's career prospects.

Introduction

Australia's education export industry has grown enormously over recent decades and is widely considered to make a significant, even essential, contribution to Australian society. The number of international students coming to Australia every year to experience world-class education continues to increase dramatically. In the 2011–2017 period, the number of internationally mobile students increased from over 3.9 million to over 4.8 million, up from 2 million in 2000 (Migration Data Portal, 2018), and it is expected to grow to 8 million in 2025 (Statista, 2018). International education brings many benefits to the host country, such as improving international relations, contributing to the economy, enriching culture, and providing highly skilled

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workers (Mellors-Bourne et al., 2013). It also benefits international students and graduates in different ways, including excellent education achievements, language skills enhancement, personal development, and career opportunities (Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

Regarding employment prospects, there are many options for international graduates who want to work in Australia upon completion of their studies. Most of them are eligible to apply for a post-study work visa or permanent residency (PR), which allows them to work, study, and become Australian citizens in time. This attractive PR policy has made Australia a desirable destination for international students. However, international graduate employment prospects do not appear as bright, as only about one-fourth of employers who participated in a study indicated that they had recruited international graduates in the past ten years (Graduate Careers Australia, 2016).

Graduates' employment outcomes depend on labor market factors, raising questions about how effectively Australian universities prepare international students for employability. It also raises questions about how international graduates use the employability capital accumulated from their studies and other activities to navigate the labor market, demonstrate it to employers, and develop their careers. To address these issues, the authors report a qualitative study investigating how international graduates used their employability capital to secure full-time jobs relevant to their studies. This study will provide more empirical evidence about how international graduates think and act (often known as habitus, see Bourdieu, 2020) in developing and demonstrating their capital to secure their employment in the host country's labor market (act as a social field with its practices and regulations, see Bourdieu, 2020). Findings from this study can provide practical implications for improving the employability agenda for international students in Australia in particular and other host countries in general.

Literature Review

Employability, Employability Capitals, and Employment Outcomes

> To be employed is to be at risk, to be employable is to be secure. (Hawkins, 1999, p. 8)

The concept of employability is increasingly applied in many different contexts and sectors. In higher education, employability is one of the critical benchmarks to measure the performance of the individual student and an institution. In general terms, employability means that "students and graduates can discern, acquire, adapt and continually enhance the skills, understandings and personal attributes that make them more likely to find and create meaningful paid and unpaid work that benefits themselves, the workforce, the community, and the economy" (Oliver, 2015, p. 59).

Employability is not static but evolves through graduates' engagement with different types of education and work (Oliver, 2015).

As the labor market continues to change rapidly and deeply, employers are looking for "work-ready" graduates with good knowledge of job-specific skills and graduate attributes. Possessing only a degree is no longer enough to guarantee graduates a competitive advantage in the job market and an employable future. Apart from subject specialisms, employers value a range of international graduates' traits, such as communication skills, empathy, negotiation skills, and confidence. Adaptability to the host country's society, culture, and language is also essential (Birrell et al., 2007; Helyer, 2007). In this research, we view employability as skills, knowledge, understanding, and specific attributes that fit the job requirements. Developing outstanding and sustainable employability for students throughout their time in the university is significant for their job prospects upon graduation.

There have been several employability capital frameworks that collectively suggest that graduate employability comprises human capital, social capital, cultural capital, personal adaptability, and career identity (Clarke, 2018; Fugate et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2017). Among these frameworks, Tomlinson (2017) provided a comprehensive one, which was adopted for the study in this chapter. Based on Bourdieu's and successive authors' perspectives of capital, Tomlinson (2017) viewed that employability includes the following capital:

- The concept of human capital was introduced and developed in the 1960s by Becker. Human capital consists of a graduate's knowledge, skills, and future performance (Becker, 1964). The knowledge and skills, in this case, are the hard skills (or technical expertise, subject specialism), career-building skills and knowledge, and other skills and competencies (such as problem-solving, teamwork skills, and critical thinking).
- Social capital has also been evidenced to have an impact on employment outcomes (Holmes, 2013). Tomlinson (2017) stated that social capital is "the sum of social relationships and networks that help mobilize graduates' existing human capital and bring them closer to the labor market and its opportunity structures" (p. 342). In general, social capital develops through daily interactions between an individual and others, facilitating and assisting awareness of and access to labor market opportunities.
- Regarding cultural capital, Tomlinson (2017) viewed it as the "formation of culturally-valued knowledge, dispositions, and behaviors that are aligned to the workplaces graduates seek to enter" (p. 343). More broadly, Bourdieu (1977) stated that cultural capital is the collection of symbolic components possessed by an individual, such as tastes, skills, or clothing, gained through being part of a particular social class. Graduates with well-developed cultural capital will have a good understanding of the culture in their future workplaces. They will present and behave accordingly, thus improving their adaptability and career development opportunities.
- Identity capital is defined as "the level of personal investment graduates make towards the development of their future careers and employability" (Tomlinson,

2017, p. 345). Formation of work identities, personal investment in employment, and development of personal employability narratives are elements of identity capital. By having a stable identity capital, graduates can have a clear career plan and proactive job market strategies.
- Finally, psychological capital is the "psychosocial resources, which enable graduates to adapt and respond positively to inevitable career challenges" (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 347). This form of capital consists of resilience, self-efficacy, adaptability, and other psychological attributes. Graduates with highly developed psychological capital will be able to effectively deal with workplace eventualities and stress (Tomlinson, 2017).

Graduates with well-developed employability capital can maximize the probability of achieving their personal goals, ambitions, and aspirations (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007; Van der Heijden et al., 2009). Further, they can minimize the threat of job loss and other job uncertainties (De Cuyper et al., 2010). Although the concept of employability has been used in various contexts and formats, the relationship between employability, employability capitals, and employment outcomes has been subject to debate. Graduates with employability skills may not always secure and maintain their employment. Their employment outcomes depend on how graduates look for jobs suitable with their existing employability capital and demonstrate their employability to recruiters.

International Graduates' Employability and Employment Outcomes in Australia

Globally, international education is predicted to be among the fastest-growing sectors in the short to medium term. In Australia, the international education sector plays a significant role in the economy, and it is currently the third-largest export sector, just behind iron ore and coal, bringing more than $21 billion in 2016–2017 to the economy (Financial Review, 2017). In 2018, Australia became the fourth leading host country for international students and was globally recognized as an education service provider (Project Atlas, 2018). In addition to providing opportunities to live in some of the world's most liveable cities, the attraction of Australian education can be attributed to its high quality, favorable learning environment and support services, marketing strategies, and a culture of welcoming international students (Studies in Australia, n.d.). Moreover, with seven universities ranked in the top 100 globally producing the most employable graduates, Australia's graduates and their employability are world-class (QS Quacquarelli Symonds, 2019). The most recent International Student Survey conducted by the Australian Government—Department of Education, Skills, and Employment in 2016 shows that nearly 90% of international students were satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience in Australia. Thanks to world-leading institutions and educators, vibrant campuses, and innovative research, Australian universities' general full-time employment rate of undergraduates and postgraduates (coursework) is relatively high, 72.2% and 86.8% in 2019, respectively (Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching, 2019).

By December 2018, 693,750 international students were enrolled in Australia's universities, 11% more than in December 2017 (Australian Government—Department of Education, Skills, and Employment, 2018). In 2018, Gothe-Snape reported that around 50,000 international graduates remained in Australia following their studies, a significant increase of more than 16,000 in just 12 months (Gothe-Snape, 2018). More international students than ever are remaining in Australia on Temporary Graduate Visas (Subclass 485), which allows them to live, study, and work in Australia after graduation for up to 2 years or up to 4 years for some higher qualifications (Australian Government—Department of Home Affairs, 2018).

Despite the strong employment prospects for Australian universities' graduates, not many international graduates successfully secure a full-time job in the host country relevant to their studies upon graduation. Research undertaken by Graduate Careers Australia found that only an overall mean of 22.3% of the interviewed employers had recruited international graduates from 2005 to 2015 (Graduate Careers Australia, 2016). To be able to study in Australia, apart from meeting the entry requirements, an international student has to be financially qualified. While the Australian Government subsidizes domestic undergraduate students' tuition fees, international students have to pay about four times more for the equivalent degrees (Universities Australia, 2019). However, the fact that they are not employed upon graduation in Australia suggests issues related to the employability agenda for international students in Australia, on top of labor market factors. The authors of this research contend that if universities charge international students a high tuition fee, they should expend more effort to help their international students develop and demonstrate their employability skills to prospective employers.

In general, many Australian universities have recognized the importance of graduates' employability and intensively prepared their students for job prospects, but there is a severe lack of research into international graduates' employability in Australia. Therefore, it is imperative to examine how international graduates look for jobs and overcome the challenges associated with that process. In that way, the employability agenda for international students in Australian higher education can also be addressed.

Research Methods

Research Design and Question

Recent studies in Australia show that many international graduates could not obtain full-time jobs relevant to their degree due to a lack of communication skills, language ability, cultural understanding, and teamwork skills. The lack of knowledge of the job application process and experience in the host country's labor market are other causes for their unemployment (Australian Association for Research in Education, 2014; International Education Association of Australia, 2016). Still, the literature reveals that some international graduates successfully obtain employment and develop their careers in Australia (Australian Universities International Directors Forum, 2017). This raises the question of why in the same socio-economic, cultural, and political context, some international graduates succeed in their career development endeavors, whereas others do not. To partially answer this question, the study reported in this chapter used the employability capital framework (Tomlinson, 2017) as a theoretical lens to investigate the factors contributing to international students' success in obtaining full-time employment in Australia upon graduation. The research question is:

What affects international graduates' success in securing full-time jobs in Australia?

Data Collection

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The interview content was guided by a set of questions based on the employability capital framework developed by Tomlinson (2017) to explore which capital is significant for international graduates in getting employment in Australia and how they demonstrated the capital to employers. Participant recruitment criteria were developed: being an international graduate of an Australian university, being employed full-time in Australia, and securing a full-time job within one year upon graduation. Participants were recruited using the snowball sampling technique, the first few participants being known to the researchers. After completing an interview, we asked the participant to nominate their friends who met the recruitment criteria. After three months, we had interviewed 16 international graduates: 9 Vietnamese, 3 Indian, 1 Indonesian, 1 Taiwanese, 1 Peruvian, and 1 Chinese. The participants were working in different industries, ranging from small to large businesses, local to global firms, and private to government sectors. They worked in Melbourne and Sydney, the two largest cities in Australia by population. The average duration of participants' working experience was 22 months. Table 15.1. outlines the summary of participant information.

Consent was obtained from the informants before each interview. During the interviews, participants were asked to narrate their journey of looking for jobs and how they obtained full-time employment, and reflect on factors that helped them secure employment. The interview data thus provided a picture of graduate experiences in securing jobs. This also helped the researchers understand the effectiveness or relevance of employability development activities in Australian universities from international graduates' perspectives. All interviews were recorded. The average duration of interviews was 35 minutes.

The data were analyzed using Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) conventional content analysis approach. Collected data were transcribed verbatim before being analyzed. The data analysis began with reading the transcript repeatedly to understand the

Table 15.1 Summary of participant information

Participant	Gender	Age	Home country	Job position	Working time in Australia after graduation (months)
P01	Male	28	Indonesia	Architect	18
P02	Male	31	Vietnam	Finance analyst	62
P03	Male	29	Vietnam	Disability development & support officer	31
P04	Female	29	Vietnam	Accounts payable administrator	21
P05	Female	26	Vietnam	Real estate salesman	12
P06	Female	29	Vietnam	Enrolled nurse	8
P07	Male	29	Vietnam	Technician	24
P08	Female	26	Taiwan	Marketing officer	36
P09	Female	34	Vietnam	Project coordinator	48
P10	Female	32	Vietnam	Internal auditor	36
P11	Male	29	Vietnam	Tax accountant	24
P12	Male	27	India	Business analyst	2
P13	Female	25	India	Business analyst	6
P14	Female	25	India	Analyst programmer	21
P15	Male	31	Peru	Data analyst	1
P16	Male	21	China	Secondary teacher	2

data and gain general insights into the narratives. Then the data were coded against the employability capital framework developed by Tomlinson (2017). Codes were combined to form themes and generate findings.

Findings

Job Search Strategy

This research showed that international graduates in Australia exercised agency to get access to potential employment opportunities in different ways. First, with vigorous growth in the number of job sites and portals in the Internet age, participants looked for jobs using all online channels. In the interview, they mentioned several virtual job platforms, including Gumtree, Seek, and Indeed. They also used Internet features like electronic mail, social networking sites, and telecommunications applications to look for and apply for jobs, seeing it convenient and economical. Participants reported that checking the job sites regularly, subscribing to job alerts, following universities' career gateways, and the "Careers" sites of targeted companies or organizations afforded them opportunities to get new job notifications. They viewed that the more information about available positions they get and the more applications submitted to different recruiters, the better chance they would get their foot in the door. A business analyst recalled:

> I had applied for thousands of jobs [...] even when an interview was going on, I still applied [to other positions]. What I thought was [...] if I applied for thousands [of jobs], maybe I will get one. (P12)

In addition, many participants looked for jobs using an offline approach. These participants suggested that it also worked well as employment opportunities could be found in traditional media like national and local newspapers, job fairs, employment services, or word of mouth. Similarly, it was suggested that social networks played an essential role in searching for job opportunities. Nearly half of the informants got employed thanks to their social relationships. They explained that they could obtain more information about jobs and get referrals, advice, and support during the job application process by expanding their network. It was noted that these participants intentionally built their social network to enhance their career prospects since they were at the university.

> My supervisor told me that there is an opportunity in this company. A brother of his wife is working in this company; he asked my supervisor if he knows anyone who can fulfill the criteria and is trustworthy, then he [my supervisor] told me that I should apply. (P15)

Moreover, door-to-door approaches, self-marketing, and dropping a resume off at targeted companies were steps that two participants took to get a job upon graduation. In some cases, the proactivity was beneficial for international students to get their first employment.

> After graduating from university, I applied [for jobs] through Seek and other job search websites such as Gumtree, but I did not receive any replies. So, I decided to go and knock on employers' doors. I went on Google and made a list of about 20 accountant firms around my area. After that, I printed 20 copies of my resume, went to every company, and left my resume with them. In the end, out of 20 resumes that I dropped off, only one rang me back for an interview. (P06)

Furthermore, using paid services such as recruitment agencies, head-hunters, and career coaches is another strategy that international graduates adopted. Sometimes, they were not charged for the services, depending on service providers' policy. However, spending money on a career management consultant is one of the last options that job seekers consider. For example, a participant failed to secure a job after months of trying; she contacted an employment service recommended by a friend and got a job with their assistance. She stated that:

> When I had problems and difficulties applying for a full-time job, I came to a career coach. At that time, I was lost. They helped me align what I want to do and what I am good at [...]. That was the moment that changed my life. (P09)

In short, graduating from a program does not guarantee that international graduates will land a job. The international graduates in this study actively used different strategies to look for a job in Australia. The more information about jobs, the more applications relevant to their capitals submitted, the better chance they could get a job.

Human Capital

Aligned with the theoretical framework, the findings of this study indicate that human capital such as hard skills, soft skills, and working experience is a critical component for international graduates' success in obtaining full-time employment in Australia.

Almost all participants suggested that graduates with strong discipline-specific skills, usually evidenced by their qualifications and grade point average (GPA), could meet job requirements and were more likely to perform well in the interviews, pre-employment tests, or probation. As a result, they could impress recruiters and would potentially be recruited. A project coordinator stated that having qualifications with a good GPA made her competitive to get her current job (P09). A data analyst concluded that possessing "qualifications is a must" to land full-time positions in Australia (P15). In their views, although it depended on positions and professions, in most cases, graduates without a relevant degree or competitive GPA needed to put more effort into demonstrating their hard skills to recruiters. Sometimes, their applications could not get through the screening stage of the selection process. Two-thirds of the participants believed that a prestigious university qualification helps international graduates at some stages of their job application, especially those who want to work in a populous city or a large international enterprise.

Participants also suggested that, when applying for a position, all applicants have already met the job requirements by proxies of qualifications or certificates; hence, the key to differentiating an applicant from the competition was their soft skills and other non-disciplinary knowledge. A participant suggested that it would be more successful if job seekers demonstrated their soft skills at the very beginning of the job-seeking process, for example, via the presentation of their CV, job application, or emails. She stated:

> Soft skills are absolutely essential as any employer (within or outside Australia) gets the first impression from the CV, cover letter, or LinkedIn profiles. (P14)

Knowledge and skills related to attending job interviews are also critical to getting a job offer. Many participants added that during the interview, recruiters would observe the applicant's appearance, attitudes, and communication to see if their skills fit in with those required for the working environment. An informant emphasized that recruiters look for job candidates with well-developed soft skills, and they usually provide opportunities for job seekers to demonstrate these skills in the interview or pre-employment tests (P12). Hence, knowing how to demonstrate soft skills effectively would help graduates secure full-time employment and advance their careers in future. Participants also recommended soft skills and attributes that interviewees should present at the interview: communication and teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, honesty, trustworthiness, diligence, responsibility, work ethics, confidence, proactivity, and loyalty. They also believed that passion and willingness to learn, and the ability to accept and learn from criticism are also highly appreciated.

> When you go to the interview, if you don't know how to present yourself, given that you are an excellent student at the university, if you don't know how to demonstrate your experience, your skillset, your knowledge, you wouldn't be able to convince the employer. You cannot just show your academic transcripts and say, "See, how great I am!" (P09)

Consistent with previous studies (Judge et al., 1995; Nunley et al., 2016), participants agreed that local work experience would leverage international graduates' employment outcomes. Interviewees explained that having work experience meant having skills, which would convince employers to offer the job. All interviewees believed that having local work experience for at least six months would significantly strengthen their employability and employment applications.

Social Capital

All interviewees agreed that having a wide social network could lift international graduates' employment outcomes. As explained earlier, by expanding both formal and informal social networks, graduates can access more information about job opportunities and receive useful guidance, advice, and referrals for job applications. For example, an accounts payable administrator of an international chemical company revealed that she got a full-time job that matched her qualification after months of working in a different field, thanks to an acquaintance who advised her information about the position:

> Before advertising officially on the websites, most companies here in Australia will advertise internally first because they want to work with the one they know better [...] There is a colleague who used to work with me in the aged care field. One day she called and told me that her daughter-in-law's company has a vacancy and I could apply for that position if I want. I applied and got it. (P04)

Having strong social capital can lead to more opportunities for international graduates in securing a job. Many participants experienced that employers would prioritize referred applicants, primarily referrals from important people. Some participants suggested that good referrals and reviews from influential people in some circumstances are even more potent than holding a permanent visa or Australian citizenship. For example, a recently graduated interviewee holding a post-study visa credited the most critical contributor of his success in securing a job position in a well-known international accounting firm to his supervisor's referral (P15).

The majority of participants further mentioned the impact of social networks on international graduates' career prospects in terms of preparation and vision. Friends and professionals could advise international students on what to do as preparation for their future career, assist them with job applications, rehearse job interviews and provide feedback, and even elicit to help them form a vision for their future career.

> Social relationships play an important role in broadening perspectives to gain knowledge and feedback. A social relationship does not always have to be a referral; it could also be someone who shows you the right direction. (P14)

In short, social capital enormously facilitates job seekers' preparation for their job application, access to job information, and employment outcomes. Graduates with well-developed social capital appeared to be able to mobilize their existing human capital and therefore have better job prospects.

Cultural Capital

Like social capital, cultural capital is a driver of individual job performance (Santos et al., 2018). In this study, most interviewees suggested that understanding Australian work culture was vital to be employed. First, they agreed that international graduates needed to know about practices related to the recruitment process. For example, they should know how to write a standard resume or CV that meets Australian employers' expectations. They should also know how to connect and promote their personal brand using social media such as LinkedIn or Indeed, which Australian employers usually use to look for and check applicants' profiles. Participant P09 confirmed that knowledge about the recruitment process contributed to her success in getting into the interview round for an important job position. She explained that as she knew recruiters would screen candidates by their CVs, she thus tried to impress them by creating a concise, clear, and honest CV highlighting the abilities that they are looking for.

Secondly, participants claimed that knowledge and skills related to job interviews are determinants of securing a job. Many elements were listed by the participants: dress code, courtesy, manners, how to respond to the interview questions, body language, voice, and tone. P04 believed that her knowledge, preparation, and rehearsal for the job interview helped her be confident and perform well in the interview.

Thirdly, participants concurred that in many industries, understanding Australian work culture is even more critical after being recruited, as it helps the new employee adapt to the workplace, get along well with co-workers and possibly maintain their employment. Australia is a multicultural and multiracial country that includes people from many religions, languages, economic groups, cultural groups, and original home countries. Therefore, understanding and tolerance of cultural differences could help avoid racial and ethnic divisions and enhance their ability to get on well with co-workers at the workplace.

> Once being recruited, understanding Australian work culture is important to integrate with the team and create bonds. (P08)

> I have to work closely with Vietnamese partners and the Government of Vietnam in my current job. So, understanding how Vietnamese people work is my advantage. Similarly, my colleagues, who are working on the China projects, must understand Chinese working culture. (P09)

In short, this study found that cultural knowledge, cultural adaptability, and flexibility are essential for working in Australia's multicultural environment. International graduates who could demonstrate it via their job application, at the job in the interview, and during the probation would have a better advantage for securing a job offer and thriving in it.

Psychological Capital

Almost all participants agreed that it is highly competitive for international graduates to get a full-time job in Australia. Five interviewees stated that their journey to secure a full-time job was smoother than their peers, thanks to their social relationship, adequate preparation, or simply luck. The rest of the participants admitted that they had encountered many difficulties and rejections when applying for a job.

> I was in a depression after graduating. [...] When I was looking for a job, I thought I would never, ever get a full-time job in Australia. (P09)

Spending a considerable amount of time and effort in job search and application and holding high hopes for positions they wanted, many participants felt frustrated when no calls for an interview, let alone job offers, resulted. However, the common thing that all participants shared was that they did not give up but found ways to overcome these challenges, frustrations, and disappointments to continue the job-hunting adventure. For example, a data analyst disclosed that he relied on his religious beliefs to overcome frustration related to the job-hunting process by accepting failures and having a positive attitude.

> It is a spiritual thing; every time I fail, I try to stay positive. [I think] If I don't get this casual job, maybe it is for something better later, which actually happened. (P15)

From this account, it seems that rejection is a part of the hiring process. The ability to accept and recover quickly from failures is considered essential for job seekers. It is suggested that international graduates can use rejection as a learning tool to gain more experiences and skills rather than being discouraged. Participants suggested that resilience and self-confidence are critical to international graduates' job search in Australia (P16). Flexibility also helped them land a job better (P05) instead of getting stuck with inefficient job-hunting strategies.

Identity Capital

This study indicates that international graduates' identity was an essential factor affecting their career prospects in Australia. Many informants believed that the visa status of graduates is the most critical evidence of identity that significantly affects employers' hiring decisions. Aligned with Tran et al. (2020), four interviewees mentioned that the temporary post-study visa status negatively impacts international graduates' job prospects as many employers are reluctant to recruit them for long-term positions. More than half of the participants believed that holding a permanent visa or Australian citizenship was vital to be employed full-time, especially by government organizations.

> [...] You must be a permanent resident or citizen to work for them as this is a government one. They will never hire foreign people. (P03)

> Many employers will only select candidates who are permanent residents/citizens, even though they don't indicate it in their job ads. (P02)

Being aware of that, some participants changed their strategy for enhancing their employment prospects by obtaining a permanent visa first. They spent much time improving and sitting on English tests such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or PTE (Pearson Language Tests), completing a Professional Year course, or obtaining a language translation certificate to get the maximum immigration points in Australia's immigration point table.

> The most important things to get full-time employment are PR or Australian citizenship, experiences, and soft skills. [...] Therefore, I focused on getting PR first. (P11)

Many informants also advised that international graduates should highlight their professional identity in job applications, for example, including evidence of participation in community services, volunteer jobs, or paid and unpaid internship programs. Although work experience can be argued as a part of human capital, it can be considered part of professional identity accumulated from previous workplace exposure. Several interviewees in this study indicated that being a member of relevant professional bodies is somewhat helpful for job seekers. Further, many maintained that having a good and updated profile on social media sites can assist recruiters or employers in accessing and validating the applicant's identity.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research adopted the employability capital framework (Tomlinson, 2017) as a theoretical lens to investigate the factors affecting international graduates' success in securing full-time jobs in Australia. The findings corroborate the ideas of Tomlinson (2017) that on top of their job search strategy, which gives them access to information about job opportunities, five employability capitals (including human capital, social capital, cultural capital, psychological capital, and identity capital) vitally make graduates employable.

First, aligned with previous studies (e.g., Berntson et al., 2006; Donald et al., 2019), this study found that human capital significantly enhances international graduates' employment prospects in Australia. Technical skills, soft skills, and work experience are the most critical human capital indicators, which should be demonstrated clearly to employers during the application process and even after being employed. Participants believed that students could develop technical skills by engaging with their learning in the enrolled courses. However, they need to take additional steps to develop soft skills and acquire work experience as many Australian universities do not pay adequate attention to cultivating students' soft skills or helping them gain work experience.

Second, this investigation also supports other researchers (such as Donald et al., 2019; Smith, 2010) who argued that social capital significantly contributes to international graduates' employability. However, it seems that within a limited time in Australia, usually equal to the length of their study program, international students could not develop an extensive social network, especially reaching those residing outside their host institution. With that limited social network, it is no surprise why international graduates struggle to land a job upon graduation (Blackmore et al., 2014, 2017), even when they have acquired relevant technical knowledge and skills.

Third, aligned with previous studies (such as Fuller et al., 2011; Tholen, 2014), this research pointed out that graduates with better cultural knowledge are more employable. Understanding the job market and being sure about whom they want to be can help orient international graduates to develop themselves to become the ideal candidates. However, from the interviewees' perspectives, cultural capital is less critical in securing a job offer compared to other capitals. Cultural understanding can, instead, help employees to thrive in their job.

Fourth, the findings of this investigation recommended that psychological capital facilitates international students to develop other employability capitals, enhance their employment outcomes and develop their careers, as also noted in previous studies (Chen & Lim, 2012; Chiesa et al., 2018; Ngoma & Dithan Ntale, 2016). Participants suggested that resiliency, self-efficacy, optimism, adaptability, and flexibility are vital competencies that an international graduate should possess in preparation for their job hunting in Australia, which is a competitive and time-consuming journey.

Fifth, the most crucial evidence of identity capital includes but is not limited to the visa status, preferably a PR or Australian citizenship, professional memberships, social media profiles, and connections to other significant people or organizations. Such identity-verifying "artefacts" are the first check to see if graduates are employable from political viewpoints. On the other hand, they could evidence prior experience or employability capital that graduates have or the extent to which they have been solidly engaged with the industry.

Notably, this study suggested that the five employability capital do not act independently in making international graduates employable but reciprocally support each other. For example, by undertaking internships, students could build their human capital by polishing their technical and soft skills. Simultaneously, they could expand their social network, enhance their understanding of Australian work culture, and strengthen personal attributes such as adaptability and flexibility. Such types of capital, in turn, help them become more confident and determined to be part of the Australian society, i.e., develop their identity. As such, a comprehensive approach is needed for developing employability for international students rather than fragmentally developing separate sets of skills and attributes. Based on this notion, it is recommended that Australian universities continue supporting students with their formal education to gain technical knowledge and skills. Simultaneously, work-integrated learning should be incorporated more prominently in the curriculum so that students can develop other employability capital (Khalil, 2015; Tran & Nguyen, 2018). It is also important to help international students develop a social network and cultural understanding via extra-curricular activities, mentoring programs, field trips, or volunteer opportunities (Kinash et al., 2016).

Last but not least, possessing relevant employability capital does not guarantee international graduates a job upon graduation. Their strategies in seeking job opportunities and demonstrating the employability capitals aligned with Australian employers'/recruiters' expectations appeared to be critical in determining their employment outcomes. Bourdieu (2020) viewed that the context in which people live acts as a social field and requires people to abide with norms and standards embedded in it. Gradually, people will form a habitus, which is their ways of thinking, beliefs, and behaviors that allow them to function well in that social field. In the case of international graduates, their habitus to function well in the Australian labor market, as a new social field compared with the old one in their home country, may not have been sufficiently developed by the time they graduate. As showed in the Findings section, international graduates exercised different job seeking and employability capital demonstration strategies. It means that each of them had different habitus in the way to securing jobs. Nevertheless, only ones that meet the expectations of employers/recruiters—being the dominant representatives of the forces in the social field of the Australian labor market in this case—were successful. This finding suggests that international students should also proactively seek employment opportunities and be able to appropriately demonstrate their employability capital to prospective employers. Thus, Australian higher education institutions need to train students in this regard, not just equip them with technical knowledge and skills, which are often formed human capital only. From the government's part, there should be initiatives to eliminate biases held by employers toward international students/graduates (Tran & Vu, 2016) and incentivized to encourage employers to recruit international graduates.

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Chapter 16
International Graduates' Exercising of Agency for Employability: A Decade-Long Journey

Josephine Lau

Abstract Different factors drive students to pursue overseas study, such as better employment opportunities. Employability is used to describe the qualities needed for obtaining employment. It is an "active social process," as one's capitals and career identity transform with the labor market and job obtained. Using an open-ended questionnaire with five international graduates who pursued master's level study a decade ago, this chapter investigates their enacted employability agency and related hindrances upon graduation. It also explores how the relations between the overseas study, their employability agency, and their present career. International graduates deployed various forms of capital when searching for employment in their home and host countries, and also when coping with personal and structural hindrances. Important aspects of exercising employability agency include the utilization of different capitals and social networks in the labor market, in addition to staying perseverant and flexible in coping with hindrances. Recommendations on bridging expectations and skills with the labor market are made in this chapter.

Introduction

Pursuing higher education abroad is prevalent among students worldwide. From 2000–2017, the number of students studying in tertiary institutions abroad has grown from 2 million in 2000 to over 5.3 million in 2017 (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2019). Studying in foreign countries could provide students with international experience, which helps them broaden their horizons, improve their linguistic ability and develop their global awareness and intercultural competency (Dywer & Peters, 2004; Huang & Turner, 2018). Many students and families are willing to invest time and money into overseas education, as they envisage extensive career prospects in other countries. Several research studies (e.g., A. Pham, 2018;Cai, 2012; Crossman & Clarke, 2009) have indicated that employers welcome the skills and competencies of candidates with international experience, as

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graduates with an overseas degree are believed to possess characteristics that make them suitable for various jobs (Cai, 2012).

However, except for those whose study and training leads to specific professional licenses, most international graduates in fields, such as arts, humanities, and sociology, must make an effort to determine their career paths and apply for eligible jobs locally or internationally. Securing employment requires more than the possession of an overseas academic degree, as individuals have to manifest their agency to enhance their employability in the competitive labor market. In other words, graduates need to take action and decide how to deploy their resources to attain desirable work positions and develop their career path. Moreover, international education might not result in employability immediately after graduation, but its outcomes may be more visible in subsequent years (Tomlinson, 2010). Although some studies have investigated employability among international students in English-speaking countries (e.g., Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Cai, 2012; Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Huang & Turner, 2018; Pham et al., 2019), there is a paucity of research on the topic in countries speaking other languages. It is also worthwhile investigating how study experiences abroad are related to development along career trajectories.

This chapter aims to investigate the individual agency enacted by graduates of an international master's program in relation to their employability, focusing on the capitals that graduates deployed and the hindrances facing the students when looking for and taking up employment in local and international labor markets amidst and after the financial crisis in 2008. The study also explores how the overseas educational experience impacted graduates' employability and career paths after a decade. This chapter enriches existing employability literature by discussing the employability of international graduates in the context of their social structure and individual agency.

Literature Review

Motivations for Studying Abroad

Besides personal expenditure and monetary support from families and donors to cover tuition fees and living expenses, seeking higher education abroad also requires an individual to bear the cost of delayed income, and investment with time and effort. Despite the high price tag, students are driven into studies overseas by factors from the socio-cultural, economic, and political aspects. Previous studies have indicated that students' motivation to study abroad is pushed and pulled by various factors in their home and host countries (e.g., Liu et al., 2018; Nghia, 2019; Tomlinson, 2010). Home country factors that push students to go abroad are limited study places, the absence of the desired subject, and poor education quality (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Factors that attract them to overseas study include an interest in the host country's culture, better living standards, immigration opportunities, and job prospects expected after study in the host country or at a specific institution (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Regarding career development, students are concerned with enhanced employability and the positive employer attitude associated with study abroad experiences, which enable them to obtain desirable jobs, establish ideal career paths and adapt to labor market needs. The overseas learning experience can be considered an investment leading to a better career outlook and higher financial returns in future (De Wit, 2015; Trooboff et al., 2008). Depending on a region's strategy for retaining foreign talent, an overseas degree might also lead to a higher probability of employment and even permanent residency (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016; Pham, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Employability and the Personal Attributes and Capitals Approach

As mentioned, career prospects and employment opportunities are major concerns for those pursuing international studies. They are part of "employability" denoting the individual qualities and graduate skills that make a person successful in the labor market (Thijssen et al., 2008). Employability components are human capital, social capital, cultural capital, career identity, and psychological attributes such as resilience and adaptability (Fugate et al., 2004; Pham et al., 2019; Tomlinson, 2017). The personal attribute and capital approach to employability emphasizes how well people invest their resources to acquire or improve their skills, knowledge, social networks, and other personal characteristics following labor market demands (Tholen, 2013). Being abroad provides an authentic environment that might not exist in the home country for students' development of skills, such as foreign language skills or soft skills related to intercultural competence and global awareness. The personal attribute and human capital approach is a relatively assertive and popular account of graduates and the job market, and it emphasizes graduates' qualities and potential to be brought into the workplace. Graduates are, thus, encouraged to invest in building up their capitals through further education and training to enhance their employability in the labor market. However, employability is not a one-sided concept merely emphasizing the individual's human capital. The agency and social structure approach provides a theoretical lens to analyze the dynamics and complexity of the interplay between graduates and the labor market.

Employability in the Agency and Social Structure Approach

The agency and social structure approach sees employability as an active, relational, and socially mediated process, which involves positioning oneself in a dynamic job market (Tomlinson, 2010). The approach is based on structuration theories from

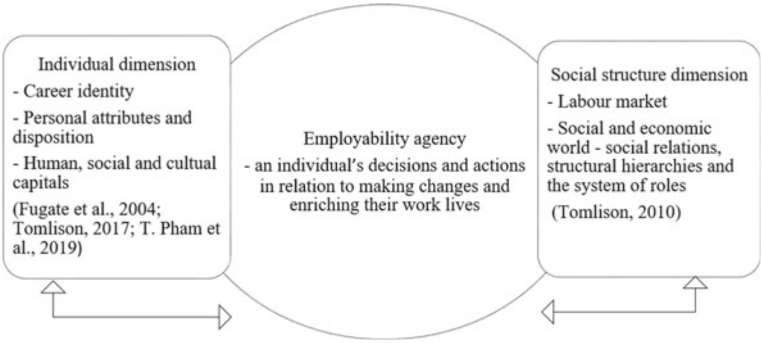
Individual dimension
- Career identity
- Personal attributes and disposition
- Human, social and cultual capitals
(Fugate et al., 2004; Tomlison, 2017; T. Pham et al., 2019)
Employability agency
- an individual's decisions and actions in relation to making changes and enriching their work lives
Social structure dimension
- Labour market
- Social and economic world - social relations, structural hierarchies and the system of roles
(Tomlison, 2010)

Fig. 16.1 The conceptual framework: the agency and social approach to employability

Bourdieu, Giddens, and Straus (see Tholen, 2015; Tomlinson, 2010). It focuses on the relationship between individuals and their social structure as well as the agency used in the process of negotiation between people and their social world. Preparing for employment is comparable to entrepreneurship. In both, people must make decisions and take action to maximize the utility of limited resources in line with their own incentives while facing the risks and uncertainties of the context in which they are situated. Similarly, the agency and social structure approach to employability suggests a dynamic interplay between internal and external dimensions. The former consists of an individual's background, skills, knowledge, competencies, and experiences; the latter is the employment market and the social and economic world. The agency and social structure approach to employability is illustrated in Fig. 16.1. Employability agency has been defined as how individuals make decisions and take action when seeking employment and educational opportunities to change and enrich their work lives, which are bounded by the structural contexts. The process is fluid, recursive, and evolving (Tomlinson, 2010). Individuals internalize external indicators, gradually developing a sense of what they consider suitable according to their propensities, experiences, and resources. The temporal aspect of employability suggests that individuals continually adjust their positioning in the job market and negotiate their identity for future meaningful employment.

Employability in International Graduates and the International Employment Context

Studying abroad provides an opportunity to develop human capital in foreign contexts. Despite the potential advantages in the competitive job market conferred by studying abroad, most graduates are described as "hidden gems" with potential waiting to be unleashed (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016), and it takes effort and other support to bridge their skills into the market. Even before entering the labor market, students engage in various activities, such as acquiring relevant skills and establishing networks so as to polish their capitals to enhance their employability. In times of rapid change in society, it is important to emphasize employability as an agentic social process, in which one must utilize different capitals to take action in pursuit of employment (Tomlinson & Nghia, 2020). When international graduates enact their agency in looking for jobs and making decisions on work locations, they must assess various personal and social factors, such as their own dispositions and resources available, employment preferences against the market situation, rewards in monetary and non-monetary terms, their desire to stay in the host country and other considerations, like family background and peer aspirations (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Pham et al., 2019). All could serve as endowments or constraints to an individual's employability upon graduation. Depending on the personal affordances against the situated employment context, it is common to see educated international students take up jobs in different locations and end up with jobs unrelated to their qualifications or past experiences. The path to the desired career is not often straightforward, and success requires time and various capitals (Pham et al., 2019).

In addition, structural factors in the international employment context strongly affect international graduate employability. Such considerations include but are not limited to a country's immigration and education policies, the knowledge and expertise demanded by employers and the new economy, and the strategies higher education institutions use to engage graduates into the job market. Both developed and developing countries are eager to recruit and retain highly skilled labor to strengthen their competitive edge. Top talented graduates are welcome to stay in host countries with attractive schemes for permanent residency and citizenship. The deployment of knowledge could contribute to the workplace and redress the shortage of workers in aging populations and knowledge-intensive economies (e.g., De Wit, 2015; Giousmpasoglou & Koniordos, 2017). Correspondingly, traditional sending countries and emerging states are eager to attract highly educated and skilled labor to serve their growing economies. For example, China, India, and Vietnam recognize the "brain drain" problem and work on policies that encourage educated elites to return to and stay in their home country (Bhandari, 2019; Ho et al., 2018).

The Present Study

Research Context: Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Program

This study investigates the employability agency of graduates from the European Master's in Lifelong Learning: Policy and Management (MA LLL). This Erasmus Mundus program was supported by the European Union, promoting the co-operation of institutions in Europe and the mobility of academics and students. This program's original consortium was Denmark, Spain, and the United Kingdom, and later joined by an Australian university. The MA LLL aimed to give professionals expertise in analyzing, developing, and implementing policies concerning lifelong learning. The program hosted students from over 40 countries who had the opportunity to study at least two of the four institutions in the consortium. Depending on their chosen locations, tuition fees and living expenses for the 2-year program could cost as much as €49,000. The European Commission offered a range of scholarships for both European and non-European students to promote student mobility. The first batch of students commenced their studies in 2005, and the program ended with the final batch admitted in 2015. Completing this program, students received an international master's degree in educational sociology.

Research Questions

The current study aims to investigate the employability agency of graduates with an overseas degree, especially the interplay between their individual agency and the social context in which they sought employment. Additionally, the study explores how the overseas experience impacted graduates' employability and career paths after a decade. Research questions (RQ) are as follows:

RQ1. How did international graduates enact their employability agency upon graduation?
RQ2. What were the obstacles they encountered when enacting their employability agency upon graduation?
RQ3. What is the relation between overseas study experience and employability agency a decade later, if any?

Method and Participants

The data for this chapter were collected from the reflection reports of five MA LLL graduates. A decade after graduation, international alumni engaged in different kinds of activities and resided in different countries, which created significant barriers to conducting physical interviews. Instead, reflection reports guided by open-ended questions were used to elicit graduates' employment experiences.

Invitations were sent to MA LLL alumni via email and messaging inboxes in the MA LLL community closed group in a social media platform in January 2019. At the end of February, five alumni agreed to participate in the study and returned the reflection reports. Of these, three were female, and two were male. Three participants originated from Asia, while the other two were from Europe. At the time of study, participants were working either in their home countries, the host country, or another country where they did not study the master program. Table 16.1 shows the profile and current locations of the anonymized participants.

Participants were asked about their motivations for studying abroad, their experiences with looking for employment after graduating from the international master's

Table 16.1 Profile and current locations of participants

S.No.	Name	Gender	Origin	Current location
1	Heather	F	Europe	Foreign country
2	David	M	Asia–Pacific	Home country
3	Nicole	F	Europe	Home country
4	Brian	M	Asia–Pacific	Foreign country
5	Jessica	F	Asia–Pacific	Foreign country

program, and their reflections on their career paths throughout the decade. Follow-up questions were sent for clarification or further exploration of issues where relevant.

Qualitative data from the reflection reports were imported to *atlas.ti* for data analysis. A deductive thematic analysis approach was adopted, as it is an appropriate and flexible approach for examining respondents' perspectives to generate insights into an issue (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The coding cycle started with coding the expressions in the reflection reports. These initial codes were grouped into themes like human capital, social capital, how employability agency was enacted, etc. Finally, a report was written to inform the findings of the research project.

Findings

Summary of Participants' Career Trajectories After Graduation

Before investigating the relationship between overseas study experience and employability agency, a summary of participants' career trajectories is provided. It serves as a background for understanding the findings in the research questions.

Heather graduated with a teaching qualification and worked as a teacher in her home country. She went overseas and engaged in youth voluntary work before undertaking the MA LLL. After graduation, she became an English instructor at an international college in the host country. Later, she moved to the Asia–Pacific region, where she pursued and completed doctoral studies. After her study, she moved to another foreign country to undertake post-doctoral work.

David was a researcher in the education field in his home country before completing the MA LLL. After graduation, he stayed in the host country and worked in the financial sector for 3 years. He then pursued doctoral studies in the Asia–Pacific region. At the time of this study, he finished his degree and started a consultancy career in education development in his home country.

Nicole was an artist from one of the host countries in the consortium. She wanted to move to the field of education before the MA LLL. After graduation, Nicole worked in part-time and short-term jobs at her home university. She then took a job as a carer to achieve more stable earning. She has now returned to her career as an artist.

Brian was a teacher and was an overseas visiting student before the MA LLL. While completing his master's thesis, he started a small business in the tourism industry with his connections in the host country. He also worked in sports-related part-time jobs. At the time of this study, he had just become a father and was currently working on his doctoral studies in the host country.

Jessica was a graduate with a language background and worked in different fields before the MA LLL. After graduation, she returned to her home country and worked in the marketing industry. Three years later, she moved to North America, where she studied adult education. She was in the process of completing her doctoral degree.

International Graduates' Enactment of Employability Agency Upon Graduation

As illustrated by the theoretical framework, employability is an active social process in which graduates deploy their capital in interaction with the structure of society and labor market. Employability agency is enacted when one makes decisions and takes action to seek employment. After completing the MA LLL program, three graduates stayed in their host countries and looked for jobs there, and two students returned to their home countries. The first research question focuses on how employability agency was manifested by the graduates to obtain their first job role in the host or home country. In other words, it emphasizes how the graduates took action and made decisions when integrating their capital into the labor market. The analysis of participants' reflections showed how they exercised agency during their job search as below:

Utilizing Human and Social Capitals Actively When Seeking Employment

As mentioned in the summary of participants' trajectories, several participants had diverse work experiences, personal networks, and other resources that could enhance their employability. When translating these forms of capital into the job market, their skills and qualifications were perceived differently in the home and the foreign countries. Jessica, who returned home to seek employment, saw her foreign experience as an advantage, as she recognized that potential employers might perceive her foreign degree as "better than the local candidates." Heather, who obtained a teaching job in the host country, considered her international degree an entry ticket to the job market, especially when compared to foreigners with similar qualifications. Social capital also plays a significant role in their process of seeking employment in both local and foreign environments. Jessica received her job in marketing and sales through someone she knew at home, and Brian started his side business thanks to the connections he had with his countrymen in the host city. The following is an example in which David explains how he made himself competitive in the job market by utilizing and showing his capital, such as improved language proficiency and management skills:

> I think (getting the employment is due to) my English-language proficiency, which greatly improved in my two years with MA LLL program... Also, my 'management' skills, which I partly acquired through the MA LLL program…I am also very persistent and diligent in accomplishing my tasks. I also like to mentor junior staff under my watch, but I have exacting standards in terms of their work. (David)

Deploying Psychological Capitals When Positioning Oneself in the Labor Market

When positioning themselves and interacting with an adverse job market, participants enacted employability agency by managing their career expectations and making flexible decisions. Although the 2-year MA LLL program offered the students academic know-how and skills for the intercultural environment, the international degree did not necessarily meet graduates' expectations for employment and career prospects. Before completing the program, Heather expected to get a job abroad related to learning and management, while Jessica desired to work in the field of learning and development. Nicole thought that a higher degree would enable her to find a job easily. However, none of the respondents obtained the first employment related directly to the lifelong learning area. After graduation, Heather received a job as an English instructor at an international school in the host country, mainly due to her past teaching credentials. Other respondents also adjusted their expectations of getting jobs in the education sector. For instance, David worked in the operation department of a financial company, in which he had no experience, while Jessica joined the marketing industry. Brian, who thought of returning to his teaching job at home, also accommodated his expectations and combined his financial and social capital to start a small business in the host country:

> Well, I was thinking to start working again as a teacher [in the home country]. However, I got a chance to be in [the host country], and the economy was in good shape. Therefore, I started a business, which was unnatural if you look at my education qualification. (Brian)

In addition, psychological capital, such as perseverance, also played an important role when respondents deployed their agency to seek employment in the job market. The employment process could take months or even years. Before the program, Heather and David envisioned themselves obtaining jobs in their host countries. They were determined to seek jobs, enduring disappointment during the job application process amidst the global economic downturn in 2008. Heather was "frustrated" when seeking employment after a number of failed job applications, and it took two months to obtain her teaching role. Similarly, despite many efforts, David "ended up doing odd jobs" for three years in the host country. It was also difficult for participants who looked for degree-related jobs in their home country. Nicole, whose home country was one of the countries that founded the consortium, was determined to search for jobs related to her international master's education. Yet, she could not obtain a full-time position and landed on only part-time employment in the field. She shared her experience as below:

> I spent two years trying to get a job within the area. I estimate that I applied for 100–200 jobs during this period of time. I never managed to get a full-time job within the area of my education. I have done some translation and transcription work, but besides from that, I have turned to other areas (which are unrelated to the degree) in order to make a living. (Nicole)

Obstacles in the Enactment of Employability Agency Upon Graduation

Despite participants' enactment of employability agency, searching for their first jobs was difficult. During the job-seeking process, respondents faced myriad difficulties, such as the economic downturn, inadequate fluency in the local language, and the job market being unfamiliar with a degree in lifelong learning. This section illustrates obstacles, which were difficult or even impossible to change or manipulate, encountered by respondents when enacting their employability agency to navigate the job market.

Personal Obstacles: The Disadvantage of Being a Foreigner

The possession of a master's degree issued by the host country's institution did not necessarily enhance foreign graduates' employability. Most respondents mentioned the disadvantage of being a foreigner in the host country's job market. David wished that he had had "better language command" when seeking employment. Jessica had the impression that her ethnicity was not "stereotypical" for her desired jobs. Heather summarized the difficulties of navigating the host country's job market as a foreigner as below:

> Local international companies did not hire a candidate without business experience. Local enterprises and schools only hired locals fluent in the language and familiar with the local set up. (Because the jobs) had to do more with solving real-life problems in (the host country) context. As in my view, employers tend to favor local work experiences. (Heather)

Higher Education Institution Obstacles: Lack of Career Vision in the Program

Despite the strong competence and international co-operation promoted in the MA LLL program, participants pointed out that the program did not link well to the labor market. All participants acknowledged that the master's program equipped them with academic and research techniques regarding human learning and development as well as the communication competencies needed to work in an international environment. However, the program was too academically focused and inadequately prepared students to take up practical jobs. Brian and Heather commented on the degree as a program that "lacked focus" and with merely a "policy jargon." Nicole described her views on the degree as she bridged it to the job market:

> I did not find it easy to apply the learned skills into the job market. Perhaps the program was too broad in its topics (from psychology to sociology/from university administrative matters to workplace learning). (Nicole)

Labor Market Obstacles: Employers' Lack of Knowledge of the Emerging Field

When integrating the capitals acquired from the international program, participants perceived that employers were not aware of the skills and knowledge they could offer. Respondents found it difficult to promote themselves to potential employers who had no idea about lifelong learning. As the idea of lifelong learning was new to employers and the labor market, there were few job offers related to the field. From the interviews, Heather commented that "the degree was vaguely formulated," which did not help her advertise herself, and she felt that she "did not have the right qualifications" to enter into the corporate world to deal with people's extended learning beyond school. David described the master's degree in lifelong learning as difficult to "translate" into "chewable" and "digestible" information for hiring staff. This feeling was shared by Nicole, who said that employers "had no clue" about what she had learned. Jessica mentioned that employers in her home country were negligent about the reputation of the institution and the international degree program:

> Employers from other countries outside of Europe are not aware of the program's reputation and the universities' reputation. I could have got the same job regardless (of the international master's degree). (Jessica)

State Economy Obstacles: Financial Disturbance in the World

When respondents graduated from the international program, the 2008 global financial crisis was affecting world economies. There were few employment opportunities available in the market for the local labor force and fresh graduates. Heather expressed that "the job market was at its worst" at the time of the recession, while David said that his time in the host country was "amidst the worst recession and global economic downturn." Even as a local, Nicole expressed her frustration in seeking employment during the financial crisis in 2008:

> The job market was still influenced by the financial crisis, and I managed only to get into one job interview. (Nicole)

Overseas Experience and Career Development a Decade Later

After graduating from the MA LLL, participants undertook jobs as English instructors, financial or marketing sector workers, small-scale business entrepreneurs, or part-time workers. A decade later, two participants were engaging in doctoral studies, two were working in the research and development field of education, and one graduate returned to her original profession, which was unrelated to the study program. The following section shows the relation between participants' overseas experiences, employability agency and the achievement of their current careers.

Although the international master's program did not provide graduates with immediate advantages in seeking employment in the field of lifelong learning or education management, the knowledge, skills, and competencies, they developed during their international study experiences were integrated into their employability agency, paving the way for them to walk their current career paths. Besides academic expertise in education policy and management, participants mentioned soft skills and competencies as essential for working with different cultures, such as cultural understanding and sensitivity and intercultural communication and co-operation. Heather and David's career trajectories both reflected the integration of professional knowledge and scholarly training from the international program, which enabled them to pursue an academic and education consulting career some years after graduation. David explained how he manifested his capitals from the MA LLL program, which were desirable and applicable to his current employment:

> I think the sheer range of content I was exposed to during the MA LLL program (remember I mentioned above the huge swath of lifelong learning coverage) helped me navigate the education consulting work. But one thing stands out; the immense training I received in academic writing under MA LLL tutors greatly improved my skillset in doing analytical pieces in my current profession. (David)

Apart from the human capital obtained from the overseas study, employability agency is strengthened through the integration of social networks established from past experiences and during the study in the host country. For example, David maintained connections from his home country, which enabled him to obtain his current consultancy work combined with the knowledge and competencies acquired from the MA LLL. Brian enacted agency by integrating his positive attributes in approaching people and seeking academic help from his social network, as he began doctoral studies in the host country:

> With the help of friends (at home and abroad), I make sure that I had good (academic) work, and I have always been positive whenever I approach people. (Brian)

As such, career success or at least career progress appears to result from how international graduates utilized human and social capitals obtained from their overseas study with their personal resources to enhance their employability agency. All of these drove their actions to move in different career paths.

Discussion

This chapter explored the employability agency of the graduates of an international master's program in a European context. The first research question looked at how respondents enacted their employability agency after graduation in the situated social structure. Graduates actively utilized human and social capitals, including credentials, skills, competencies, and social networks from the past or experiences abroad in the target labor market. The findings echoed previous studies related to the different forms of capital that Chinese students and graduate migrants used to enhance their employability in the United Kingdom (Huang et al., 2014) and Australia, respectively (Pham et al., 2019). As mentioned in the literature review, employability agency includes the actions and decisions taken in an active, relational, and socially mediated process when seeking employment in a dynamic job market (Tomlinson, 2010). Whether pursuing a career at home or in a foreign country, credentials alone are insufficient to evidence high productivity and superior skills (Tholen, 2013; Tomlinson, 2010). Other human capital and social networks are required to secure employment opportunities (Fugate et al., 2004). In this study, graduates faced a choice between survival and their ideal career path when diving into the labor market after graduation. They demonstrated their flexible positioning and psychological capitals, such as perseverance and persistence, when navigating in adversity in the labor market. That is they exercise agency in using their employability capital in the target market in a way that fit their choice.

The second research question enquired about the obstacles that graduates encountered when enacting employability agency in the social structural context. There were four categories of obstacles from the findings are personal factors, the higher education institution, the labor market, and the state economy. Participants viewed these hindrances as uncontrollable or unchangeable. They encountered challenges when they first attempted to find employment in the labor market, especially those seeking employment in foreign countries. These challenges included the disadvantage of being a foreigner compared with local candidates, poor local language skills, cultural background, and a lack of interest in foreign candidates (Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016). Respondents pointed out the missing links between the study program and the labor market and corporate world. Previous studies (e.g., Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Tomlinson, 2010) suggested that higher education institutions must construct international programs that increase employability skills and provide career guidance to help students transition into competitive labor markets. Additional efforts have been recommended to develop employability capitals for international students, who commonly lack a social network, local work experience, and a cultural understanding of the host country. Employers and the private sector might be unaware of the competencies and skills graduates from programs offer, especially in emerging fields such as lifelong learning. To narrow the gap between school and work in the higher education sector, companies and governments must communicate closely to exchange information, formulate policies and adjust their expectations of graduates' skills, knowledge, and competencies. The last obstacle mentioned by respondents in this study was the unexpected global financial disturbance in 2008. The unstable world economic situation posed additional challenges for respondents in navigating the job market, which offered limited opportunities.

Linking the findings of the second research question to Bourdieu's concepts of social, habitus, and capital (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), the target labor market acted as a social field in which the graduates utilize the capital accumulated from their international education. That social field was unfamiliar to them and contain several expectations that was out of hand for foreigners like them, mostly in terms of language proficiency and cultural understanding. Within that new social field, their way of thinking and acting in related to utilizing employability capital for employment purposes appeared to misalign with what was expected in that social field. They also do not have enough capital or access to resources to make them more employable, even the degree—the basic employability signal—was not much known by employers. This is contrast to Bourdieu's notion of "fish in water" (Bourdieu, 1990) to denote a favorable condition where one's habitus is aligned with the social field, making that person function well. Graduates in this study mostly was "fish out of water," facing so many struggles. As such they had to exercised agency to help them overcome the challenges, survive and move on with their career plans, to be discussed in the next paragraph.

The last research question is on the relationship between graduates' overseas experiences and their career development. Past studies on international education (e.g., Brooks et al., 2012; Crossman & Clarke, 2009) indicated that overseas experiences equipped students with essential skills for an international work environment, such as intercultural competence, cultural awareness, and commination strategies. In this study, graduates displayed employability agency as a continuous integration of human and social capitals from abroad and different experiences into personal resources when constructing their current career pathways. Of the five respondents, four had engaged in doctoral studies and integrated the skills and knowledge they acquired from the academic program into their professions at certain points. This study did not aim to illustrate a causal relationship between undertaking an international master's and the completion of doctoral studies. Rather, it explores how study abroad experiences have been integrated into participants' human and social capitals in the enactment of agency for employment and career development. Regardless of whether they were living in their home country or a foreign country, respondents in this study took jobs that might not be expected or desirable, and some had tried for years to engage in a career aligned with the skills they gained from studying abroad. This shows that employability is an active social process that requires the agency to mediate between human and social capitals in the constantly changing job market.

Study Implication and Limitation

The study abroad experience and the international academic program enhanced respondents' human and social capital when enacting employability agency upon graduation and after a decade. Employability is an active social process integrating personal qualifications, past experiences, and human and social capital. When facing a challenging job market, graduates demonstrated their employability agency by merging their relevant capitals and showing perseverance and flexibility when coping with adversity. Shaping a career along the life course requires a proactive approach. The capital and social networks acquired from the overseas study might be deployed when enacting an employability agency in pursuing career goals. This study suggests that individual students should prepare themselves mentally to persevere and be flexible in the job market and familiarize themselves with their host countries' immigration policies and opportunities for foreign workers. Higher education institutions must strengthen their career services to bridge the academic world with the world of work. Employers should communicate with institutions and describe the qualities they are looking for in candidates. At the state level, it is essential to align education policies with industry demand and the economic situation, as these all impact the future intake of students and the potential workforce.

The present study has some limitations. First, this chapter analyzed only five reflection reports of international master's students. Although the cases demonstrated unique experiences and provided insights into international graduates' employability agency, findings from these cases should not be generalized. Second, data were based on participants' memories, which might not have covered all events happening in the past. Longitudinal studies could be helpful for investigating how employability agency is shaped along graduates' pathways.

Conclusion

The study reported in this chapter depicted how graduates of an international master's program enacted their employability agency and the hindrances they experienced in doing so after graduation. Additionally, it explored how study abroad helped graduates exercise employability agency to construct career pathways. This study shows that employability is a dynamic relational process of an individual interacting with the job market. When enacting an employability agency, an individual must assess their own resources and capitals against the employment environment. In turn, the job market signals job seekers, who must adjust their positioning and future carer plans. Echoing previous studies, this study confirms that studying abroad is a worthwhile investment that positions students well and gives them better prospects for future employability. International experience broadens a student's horizon and equips them with intercultural communication and multicultural knowledge, which strengthens their human capital and social networks when enacting employability agency. However, employability is a unique and individualized experience, which is associated with how one enacts one's agency in translating these capitals into employment outcomes. Further studies should explore the role of agency in shaping one's career trajectory.

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Chapter 17
Translating Employability into Employment Outcomes: A Case Study of Ph.D. Graduates' Experiences

Binh Chi Bui, Elsa Gonzalez, and Candice Wilson-Stykes

Abstract The qualitative study reported in this chapter investigated how Ph.D. graduates from U.S.-based universities and elsewhere translated their employability into employment outcomes in the U.S. labor market. Through Bourdieu's lens (i.e., capital, field, and habitus), this chapter presents three overarching themes: perceiving employability via capital, struggling in the labor market as the field, and adjusting habitus. It highlights their experiences in securing employment and indicates the personal and non-personal factors that appeared to determine their career paths. Through these findings, this chapter provides significant insights into the importance of managing and developing employability capitals for career development in the U.S. context.

Introduction

In the past two decades, academic attention in Europe and Australia has turned to graduates' employability (Clarke, 2018). Although it has been a high-profile topic elsewhere, employability has been absent in any major policy discourse for American higher education. While the oversupply of high skilled workers in the United States (U.S.) was observed in the 1970s (Thelin, 2019), it seems that not until the Obama administration that was an emphasis placed on employability, as seen through the Department of Education's Postsecondary Institutions Rating System (PIRS) proposal (House, 2013a, 2013b).

PIRS (White House, 2013a, 2013b) could be considered a response to the active movement of employability research in Europe and Australia (Clarke, 2018). In this movement, employability research has focused on bachelor graduates rather than postgraduates, such as Ph.D. graduates. In the United States, the few studies that have focused on doctoral education are market-focused and have looked at the employer's perspective. In these studies, researchers have addressed market outcomes of doctoral education (e.g., Andalib et al., 2018; Ellenbecker et al., 2017; Main

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et al., 2019; Stenstrom et al., 2013; Stephan, 2012; Wallace et al., 2008) and have generalized findings about the factors that determine Ph.D. graduates' employment outcomes (i.e., Andalib et al., 2018; Ellenbecker et al., 2017; Main et al., 2019; Stenstrom et al., 2013), employers' perspectives on Ph.D. graduates' employment outcomes (i.e., Wallace et al., 2008), and Ph.D. graduates' employment outcomes and earnings (i.e., Stephan, 2012). Nevertheless, these studies have hardly addressed the experiences of how Ph.D. graduates translate their employability into employment outcomes.

The need to explore how Ph.D. (hereafter noted as "doctoral") employability is turned into jobs is considerable given that the United States has produced the second largest number of Ph.D. graduates after China (Wenqin et al., 2018). In 2018, 54,246 new Ph.D. degrees were conferred by 431 higher education institutions (National Science Foundation, 2019). When doctoral degrees of all kinds are included, the number for 2018 was 184,074 (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2019). As NCES (2019) reported, contributing most to such a number were programs in health professions and related studies, legal professions and studies, education, and engineering. Table 17.1 shows that from 2005–2006 to 2017–2018, the number of doctoral degrees of all kinds conferred from these fields of studies had a 25% increase, from 104,073 to 138,446. In the academic year 2017–2018, these fields churned out more than 75% of doctorates; the largest contribution to this percentage came from the health professions and health-related programs (44%).

Except for professional doctor's degree holders, 1.6% of research-related doctoral graduates (e.g., Ph.D. and D.Ed.) were unemployed in 2018 (Torpey, 2019). Because the number of doctoral graduates at the beginning of 2019 was 4.5 million nationwide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), the absolute number of unemployed doctoral graduates for 2018 could be 72,000. Exacerbating the problem of unemployment is now the number of Ph.D. degree holders from other countries who have stayed in or immigrated to the United States to develop their careers. These international degree holders have increased competition for doctoral-level employment (National Science Foundation, 2020; Stephan, 2012). In this context of high unemployment and the oversupply of doctoral degree holders, doctoral employability has been a concern to stakeholders in U.S. higher education. Academics have called for a discussion of

Table 17.1 Doctoral degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions in selected school years (2005–2018)

Field of study	2005–2006	2009–2010	2013–2014	2017–2018
Total	*138,056*	*158,590*	*177,587*	*184,074*
Health professions and related programs	45,677	57,750	67,447	80,305
Legal professions and studies	43,569	44,627	44,169	34,544
Education	7,584	9,237	10,929	12,780
Engineering	7,243	7,706	10,010	10,817
Other 27 fields of studies	33,983	39,270	45,032	45,628

Note Data from NCES (2019)

the employability of doctoral degree holders (Gould, 2015). Joining this discussion, we aimed to explore the experiences of Ph.D. graduates turning their employability into jobs. The research question was.

> *How do Ph.D. graduates translate their employability into employment outcomes in the U.S. labor market?*

The significance of this study is that it brought about new understandings of doctoral employability within the U.S. context. It informed diverse stakeholders of how qualities of Ph.D. graduates were developed and used to affect the process of obtaining employment. Based on its findings, prospective students can think more carefully about their doctoral education plan; current Ph.D. students can qualitatively assess their preparation for the U.S. labor market; and higher education institutions can adjust their Ph.D. programs to optimize their students' preparation for this market.

Conceptualizing Employability

As Vanhercke et al. (2014) observed, employability is often simplistically defined as the ability to get employed. Employability can be defined as the basic skills, such as communication, numeracy, and problem-solving (Clarke, 2018), which are generic (soft) skills as opposed to discipline-specific (hard) skills (Cimatti, 2016). It is sometimes defined as graduates' capacity to move into the labor market and realize employment opportunities and personal attributes presented in a certain labor market (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). It can also be defined as the ability or capacity to obtain employment, maintain employment, or find new employment (Hogan et al., 2013). While these definitions reflect the human capital perspective, which focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes of graduates, there have been other efforts to disentangle the construct.

Brown et al. (2003) distinguished between absolute employability and relative employability. Absolute employability refers to graduates' knowledge, skills, and personal attributes, and relative employability refers to employers' judgment based upon their need for human resources. Addressing the absolute and relative meanings of employability another way, Veld et al. (2015) distinguished between objective employability (i.e., getting employed or not getting employed) and subjective employability (i.e., self-perceptions of employability). Regarding the latter, Vanhercke et al. (2014) and Veld et al. (2015) differentiated three psychological approaches. They are the competence-based approach (evaluating one's abilities to get employed), the dispositional approach (evaluating one's motivational attitudes toward employability), and the perceived approach (perceived employability). Preceded by context and predicted by the interaction between personal and contextual factors, perceived employability is an "individual's perception of his/her possibilities of maintaining employment and getting new employment in another organization" (Vanhercke et al., 2015, p. 180). It can be internal or external, depending on whether it relates perceptions of attributes such as knowledge, skills, and abilities or external factors such as market demand, institutional prestige, and market conditions (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2017).

In a different but related effort, Holmes (2013) offered three competing explanations of employability: employability as possession, employability as position, and employability as a process. According to Clarke (2018), these explanations respectively reflect the dimension of human capital (skills, competencies, and work experience), social capital (networks, social class, and university ranking), and individual behaviors (career self-management and career-building skills). These explanations suggest that employability is affected by factors external to the educational process, such as the context or/and market conditions (Clarke, 2018; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005).

In fact, employability is a catch-all concept and as Harvey (2001) posited, a complex model. For this reason, Suleman (2018) doubted that any definition of employability is incomplete. According to Suleman (2018), employability is not conducive to straightforward definitions; a one-sided approach to understanding this concept, such as listing employability skills, simply diminishes its perceived relevance to higher education. Different employers have different requirements, and their requirements change over time (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Cai, 2013). This reality puts the employability of graduates at stake. To address the challenge of conceptualizing employability, Clarke (2018) proposed that employability "be reconceptualized as comprising the human capital, social capital, and individual behaviors and attributes that underpin an individual's perceived employability, in a labor market context, and that, in combination, influence employment outcomes" (p. 1931). These reconceptualized dimensions of employability reflect the ideas proposed by McQuaid and Lindsay (2005), Hillage and Pollard (1998), Holmes (2013), and other researchers (see Suleman, 2018). Clarke's reconceptualization suggests that to study the construct of employability, there must be a conceptual framework that can capture all the dimensions.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, the construct *employability* applied to Ph.D. graduates. Given this use, we employed Bourdieu's (1977, 1986, 2020) concepts—capital, the field, and habitus—as the integrated conceptual framework for the study. According to Bourdieu (1986), there are four categories of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic.

Economic capital refers to materials that can be converted into exchange media such as money and copyrights. In studies about employability, economic capital is not often studied as it is de facto the economic resources conversed into cultural capital and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Cultural capital exists in the embodied state (e.g., knowledge, skills, and dispositions), the objectified state (e.g., a piece of writing or painting), and the institutionalized state (e.g., copyright or diploma). In this study, cultural capital is not distinguished from human capital as cultural capital covers the cognitive schemata (knowledge, skills, etc.) (Clark & Zukas, 2013; Nash, 1990). Social capital, formal or informal (Fugate et al., 2004), refers to the networks between agents who know and recognize each other. It is related to and may influence or be influenced by cultural capital. Symbolic capital may be economic, cultural, social, or the combination of these forms that culminates in a certain recognized value.

The field is a social space that is characterized by class relations (Bourdieu, 2020). It structures an agents' habitus: a system of long-lasting and reversible dispositions like thinking and acting (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus is a reflection of the environment and personal history of agents. It may be structured by the field and may also structure the field. When an agent transitions to a new field, that field becomes a field of struggles, and habitus affects how the agent navigates the new field. In this sense, habitus becomes conscious and reflexive through the actions and strategies that agents use in the few fields (Hurtado, 2010). Therefore, characteristics of the field influence the development of habitus (Bourdieu, 2020).

Through Bourdieu's (1977, 1986, 2020) lens, we conceptualized the process of Ph.D. graduates securing their current positions as a process of struggle. The field for this process is the labor market, which then becomes the field of struggles. In the labor market, Ph.D. graduates need to fare well relative to many other Ph.D. graduates applying for jobs. Under this competitive and unfamiliar condition, applicants' human agency is best displayed through the practices (actions and strategies), representing their habitus, with what they possess as capital. As such, we conceptualized that securing their current position was an outcome determined by their capital, their habitus, and the field. The relation between these components (Power, 1999) gave meaning to how graduates made sense of their employability to translate it into the employment outcomes.

Research Procedures and Methodology

In order to understand the experiences of Ph.D. graduates in turning their employability into jobs, we conducted an exploratory case study (Yin, 2017) on five Ph.D. graduates as subcases (Table 17.2). By "Ph.D. graduates," we meant those who had a Ph.D. degree and were working in the United States. They might be U.S. citizens, residents, or foreigners, and they had pursued doctoral education in the United States or elsewhere. These participants, whose names and affiliations were changed to ensure confidentiality, were within our professional network. Two were working in a Midwestern state; another two were working in a South Central state; the other was working in an Eastern state. They were purposefully chosen based upon the extent of their success in searching for academic positions. As Table 17.2 indicates, one was a K-12 teacher; one was a post-doctoral fellow; one was a lecturer; two were assistant professors.

The data collection method was one-on-one semi-structured interviews with three topics: personal and educational background, job application process, and reflection

Table 17.2 Participants' demographics

	Age range	Race (ethnicity)	Gender	Ph.D. education	Work
Maria	40–50	Asian	Female	Educational administration	Math teacher at High Academy
Joe	30–40	Asian	Male	Medical pharmaceutical sciences	Post-doctoral fellow at Hospital Lab
Le	40–50	Asian	Female	Higher education	Lecturer at University A
Daisy	30–40	Mexican	Female	Higher education	Assistant professor at University B
Chris	40–50	White	Male	Finance	Assistant processer at University C

on employment success in the U.S. labor market. As elaborated by Qu and Dumay (2011), the semi-structured interview with its scheduled and follow-up questions allows an experienced interviewer "to modify the style, pace, and ordering of questions to evoke the fullest responses" in the interviewees' terms and their way of thinking and using language (p. 246). In their interviews, the respondents communicated their experiences in response to each main question for 10 to 20 min. During this time slot, the follow-up questions were asked; these follow-up questions changed from respondent to respondent to ensure a smooth flow to collect robust data. The interviews were virtually conducted, and each lasted for 30 to 60 min. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the primary researcher. The reasons for conducting the interviews virtually were the 2020 pandemic and the geographical distance between the participants and the interviewer.

We employed Bourdieu's (1977, 1986, 2020) concepts of capital, field, and habitus to frame the experiences of how Ph.D. graduates got their current positions. Hence, we used the deductive content analysis technique to analyze the data. This technique consists of categorization development and coding for the categories or themes (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Elo et al., 2014). The themes developed are related to the three components of the integrated conceptual framework: (1) perceiving employability via capital, (2) struggling in the labor market as the field, and (3) adjusting habitus. After the interviews were transcribed into 40 pages, 64 codes were found and fit into the themes. For data trustworthiness, we contacted the participants several times for member checking and consulted participants' websites, their organizations' websites, and their Google citations for data triangulation.

Research Findings

The Participants

Maria

In her forties, Maria had three years of experience in K-12 education in the United States and seven years of experience in K-12 education in her Asian country. She completed a Ph.D. degree in educational administration and graduated in 2009 from a university in the Pacific region. After graduation, she took up a two-year post-doctoral fellow position opened by her advisor. After the post-doctorate position, she applied for employment in academia. However, because she did not publish educational administration research, finding an academic job in this field was difficult. "My CV is thin. In fact, I didn't publish any research in the field," she said.

Not finding a job in academia, Maria decided to become a K-12 math teacher. For the first teaching job at a secondary school, she consulted websites and job fairs. After one year, she attended a job fair and was offered a new job at High Academy, a better secondary school in the county where she lived. She attributed her success in securing this second job to her experiences in improving students' learning attitudes—a value to High Academy.

In relation to the labor market, she opined that people need to know what they should prepare as a Ph.D. graduate. As she believed, one needed to have unique skills to find jobs successfully. If they wanted to work in higher education institutions, they needed to have publications. The question was what kind of research one did, and what skills he or she developed in such a kind.

Joe

Joe also immigrated from Asia. He was in his thirties and had four years of experience in his current job as a post-doctoral fellow. Unlike Maria, he obtained his Ph.D. degree in medical pharmaceutical sciences from a European university in 2016. Immediately afterward, he started working as a post-doctorate fellow at Hospital Lab in the Midwest.

Concerning the current job, he reported that he looked for it on Nature.com and Zinfinjob.com. He submitted several applications, did seven interviews, and got one job offer. According to him, this employment success was thanks to the consistent match of his background from all the education cycles: B.Sc., M.Sc., and Ph.D. and probably thanks to his six-month internship at a famous American university.

In the interview for this study, he shared that he was looking for a faculty job. He saw the U.S. labor market for Ph.D. graduates as a place full of opportunities for Ph.D. graduates, including Ph.D. immigrants. However, faculty jobs required criteria that he did not think he could adequately satisfy, such as journal publications and funding. He also observed that the Trump administration made finding academic jobs increasingly hard for international researchers.

Le

Le was also Asian but was born in the United States. She was in her forties and had ten years of experience in her current job. After obtaining a degree in higher education in 2009 from a university in the South Central region, Le worked as a staff member in multicultural affairs from 2009–2011 at University A. In 2011, she applied for the lecturer position at this university and successfully got it.

She reported that she contacted a faculty member at her alma mater for the current job and got to know about its vacancy. Before that, she looked at job postings, higheredjobs.com, listserv, and so on. She also consulted members in educational organizations such as the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). Sometimes, these resources were very helpful. In her perception, getting a faculty job was different from that in the business world. On one occasion, she had to attend multi-interviews on many days, including one or two presentations on teaching and/or research and different meetings with different people: students, professors, deans, and chairs.

Reflecting on the chance to get an academic job in the United States, she thought that the value of Ph.D. graduates to employers was a factor, but becoming a faculty member required different qualities. She observed that the Ph.D. landscape was changing. Doing a Ph.D. degree in health education, for example, did not mean that the Ph.D. graduate would work in the field of health education. In order to get a job, Ph.D. graduates had to be flexible. As she experienced, whether a Ph.D. graduate could get employed depended on the field that he/she studied. It also depended on whether doctorates would be ready to move between states and other factors.

Daisy

As a Mexican American in her thirties, Daisy successfully found an assistant professor position at University B in the South Central region. She obtained her Ph.D. degree in higher education from a flagship university in 2016. She said that upon entrance to the labor market, she was selective in applying for jobs by looking at only reputed universities.

Regarding her current position, she revealed that she knew about the position through her advisor. It required a professional focus on policy and finance, which best suited her research focus during her Ph.D. program. According to her, securing this position took a huge amount of effort and time. For the position, she underwent numerous steps. Specifically, she had 15 back-to-back interviews with the college professors and leaders of the department in which she was then working. They took about five consecutive hours. Besides, she talked with students on campus, did a presentation, and had dinner with all faculty members of that college.

On the U.S. labor market, Daisy stated that demand was cyclical and unpredictable. Although American higher education institutions were offering more Ph.D. programs in higher education and thus still needed Ph.D. graduates of this field, they were simultaneously producing many. She believed that there was a combination of factors that affected doctoral employability. Some could be controlled, but the others could not. Given her four years' experience in the current position, she was sure that to get an elite job, a Ph.D. graduate should have developed the ability to do research. She also believed that in the current labor market, employers care about who supervised a Ph.D. graduate.

Chris

Chris was a White American and in his forties. He completed his Ph.D. degree in business finance from a Boston-based university in 2016. Before getting this academic job, he had 12 years of experience in the U.S. finance industry.

During the job application process, Chris posted his portfolio on a lot of websites where universities announced their job openings. He had applied for 90 positions this way and had 17 in-person interviews. As he recalled, most interviews did not lead to any offer because, in the labor market, a start-up package received more than 200 applications. After the application deadline, applicants were shortlisted to less than 50. Then, the number was reduced to 10 for the interview series, and finally, only one was chosen. His first-round interview for the current job was conducted at the American Finance Association Conference by two faculty members for half an hour. As the next step, he flew out to have a campus interview with all the finance department's faculty members and chair. Then, he had two sessions where he did a 30-min research presentation and a 60-min teaching demonstration. The topic had been given less than one week before. After that, he had dinner with two faculty members.

According to Chris, the labor market changed every year. There were then more candidates for fewer job openings. In the competitive labor market, whether an applicant could secure the applied position depended on various factors. He thought two of them were the reputation of the university candidates attended and their publications. Chris did not graduate from famous universities and had only one publication, but he thought his 12 years of experience balanced the disadvantages and made him competitive. He mentioned other factors that influenced employment success: whether candidates were going to stay long with the university, accepted to work in remote locations, and had cultural knowledge as well as English proficiency in the case of foreign applicants.

Experiences in Translating Employability into Employment Oustcomes

Perceiving Employability via *Capital*

The participants perceived that to be employable, Ph.D. graduates needed to have sufficient cultural, social, and symbolic capital. For cultural capital, they needed to have both discipline-specific qualities or expertise and generic qualities. For expertise, research ability was the most important, whose indicators were papers and publications. Compared to an average of 1.5 publications while doctoral students in their Ph.D. program in the United States (Main et al., 2019), Maria had two publications; Joe had nine papers and publications; Le had two publications; Daisy had one publication and some ongoing research projects; Chris had one publication. This quality offsets the absence of other qualities, according to Chris. Reflecting upon this, Daisy viewed that:

> To get the academic job, applicants must indicate that they are competent in either quantitative or qualitative research or both. Research ability is evidenced by publications, especially those in top journals. It is the merit that higher education institutions valorize when they make hiring decisions.

According to the participants, the kind of expertise also determined their employability. For example, Maria felt that the research project that Ph.D. graduates did and the skills developed in that research would count when they apply for academic jobs. She published two chapters on math education, but her Ph.D. degree was about educational administration. She thought that employers were skeptical about the match between what she studied and what she published. Similarly, Joe admitted that his expertise in the gene-related disease was not in the interest of many U.S.-based research organizations. In this regard, Le perceived that employability was much about the market demand, resonating with many researchers (e.g., Clarke, 2018; Holmes, 2013; Suleman, 2018) that postulated the market demand as an important employability factor.

The participants also perceived that generic activities, such as teaching, research, and service, were important. In the United States, these generic activities are essential for academic work (Ellenbecker et al., 2017). Thus, to fit in with the academic job, the participants needed to have work experience in different organizations, teaching, working with students from different walks of life, etc. Since the academic job presents different types of tasks, they also needed different skillsets. To specify the generic qualities of Ph.D. graduates, Le detailed the following:

> … work experience at various types of institutions, being interested in research, prior teaching experience – undergraduate courses as well as graduate courses, a record of working well with diverse student populations, the ability to work well in a collaborative environment, the ability to be self-sufficient and hold myself accountable for completing important tasks, a good understanding of how the target institution works, being comfortable with the pace at which the organization works, and so on.

To Le’s list of generic qualities, Chris added that cultural knowledge and English language proficiency were required of Ph.D. graduates from non-English speaking countries. Chris opined that the level of required spoken English is much higher than written English. As he observed, students, especially in the Midwest, have not been exposed much to foreigners. So, they expect English fluency from their instructors. Although Joe’s job was not about teaching, he also admitted that cultural understanding and English proficiency would be important to work with other experts and publish research.

The participants also perceived the necessity to have sufficient social capital in securing academic jobs. Those successful in obtaining academic employment consulted their acquaintances in educational networks. These are their former faculty members, mentors or advisors, and members of educational organizations such as NASPA and ASHE. About this, Le narrated:

> I contacted a faculty member at my alma mater and got to know about its vacancy. Before that, I looked at job postings, higheredjobs.com, listserv, and so on. Besides, I consulted those who were working in educational organizations, such as NASPA and ASHE. Sometimes, they were those who really helped.

Social capital is also associated with an institutional reputation (Clarke, 2018; Holmes, 2013). Joe talked about the famous European institution he attended and the Ivy League institution for his internship. Daisy mentioned her Ph.D. university’s flagship status. Chris resonated with Joe and Daisy by emphasizing that institutional reputation was an employability factor. The social capital indicated in their experiences was both formal (e.g., job websites) and informal (e.g., acquaintances and the reputation of universities, etc.). According to Fugate et al. (2004), the informality shows that their social capital was well-developed.

Through their experiences, we also found symbolic capital associated with other forms of capital that Bourdieu (1986) explained. Maria had experiences in teaching students with negative learning attitudes. Given this quality, she was “a producer of values” as she would benefit High Academy by improving students’ learning attitudes and learning outcomes. Le believed she was employed thanks to her diverse experiences and generic qualities. They symbolized her ability to handle a variety of tasks involved in the academic job. Chris attributed his employment success to his experiences in accessing data. Mining data symbolized the ability of candidates to handle the expertise-based job when it came to numbers and figures. The participants also emphasized publications. They symbolized the research competence and the future ranking benefit for their universities. Regarding social capital, symbolic capital was found to be associated with the reputation of institutions that the Ph.D. graduates attended. According to Chris, “[G]raduates from good universities have good cohort friends and thereby, having good chance to collaborate.” Institutional reputation symbolized the participants’ strength of networks that would benefit hiring universities and colleges in terms of teaching and research collaboration.

The forms of capital above signified the participants’ perceived employability. However, Ph.D. programs do not traditionally provide students with all capital as such. Even if they do, having adequate capital does not ensure employability because perceived employability is subjective (Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2017; Vanhercke et al., 2014; Veld et al., 2015). The participants understood that their doctoral education background did not automatically lead to jobs or even job opportunities. To translate their employability into employment outcomes, they had to address numerous challenges.

Struggling in the Labor Market as the Field

The participants had different amounts of cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Maria did not have relevant publications. By contrast, Joe, Le, Daisy, and Chris each had at least one relevant publication. Le and Chris had experiences in working for universities and colleges and in a relevant industry, respectively. Joe and Daisy graduated from famous institutions. Because of this, Joe, Le, Daisy, and Chris had advantages over Maria when entering the labor market. As for Joe, despite having the largest number of papers and publications and graduating from a famous university, he had similar disadvantages to Maria as an immigrant. In addition, the U.S. labor market was overcrowded with doctoral graduates and thus more competitive (Andalib et al., 2018; Gould, 2015; Stephan, 2012) and more restrictive under the Trump administration. Joe said:

> The U.S. is one of the most popular destinations for immigrants but, if the Trump administration issues more restrictive immigration policies, there will be fewer opportunities for well-educated people from other countries. The U.S. labor market for Ph.D. is now more selective.

Because Maria and Joe were immigrants, they had to address more challenges and thus struggled more than the others. The most struggling Ph.D. graduate might be Maria, who did not have relevant publications or any other impressive employability qualities. Because of these weaknesses, she applied for an academic job in educational administration several times but failed. She reported:

> My CV is thin. In fact, I didn't publish any research in the field. I, in person, went to many universities from California to North Carolina for the applications. I failed all for the academic job in educational administration. I thought of applying for the academic job in math education, but it did not match with my Ph.D. degree. … As time went by, I felt age as another challenge. Also, I couldn't compare with American Ph.D. graduates in terms of English, social networks, and so on, you know.

Joe felt the same as Maria in the language regard. He thought that as a non-native speaker, English proficiency would need long-term preparation. He intensely practiced English skills for interviews. As a foreigner, applying to organizations that were willing to sponsor a green card application was also significant. He had interviews with many of these organizations, but very few agreed to sponsor him. When asked if he would prefer academic jobs such as a faculty position, he admitted that finding an academic position was hard given his published research and funding compared to other American candidates. He shared:

> I love to become a faculty member too. But my research publications are modest compared to others in the field. Part of the problem is uh funding, which I don't have. There are many competent candidates in the U.S. So, even the post-doctoral jobs, which used to be the easiest job in academia, now is too much pressure on doctoral workers.

Le, Daisy, and Chris also admitted that getting an academic job was a painful process. After submitting a large number of applications, they got only some interviews. Each interview entailed multiple meetings with faculty members and chairs and even provosts, talking to students, presentations, and dinner with their college. During these occasions, they had to best signal their capital to employers, which was the biggest challenge. They also understood that not all interviews resulted in a job offer. For example, Chris had 17 interviews but got only three job offers. However, as American applicants, the three Ph.D. graduates confronted fewer challenges than Maria and Joe. This was true in terms of cultural knowledge and English proficiency. Chris indicated the challenge facing Maria and Joe, "[N]o matter whether racial bias exists or not, but if their English is a second language, Ph.D. graduates have to fight."

Both Maria and Joe admitted the language challenge, although they were both good language learners. However, because Joe had more cultural, social, and symbolic capital than Maria via his papers and publications and attending a famous university, he finally got an academic job while Maria finally took a non-academic route. Maria simply explained that she understood what she needed given what she had and lacked. Her explanation confirmed McQuaid and Lindsay's (2005) postulation that personal factors, personal circumstances, and external circumstances affect employability. As immigrants, both entered the U.S. labor market as a strange and uncomfortable field, compared to Le, Daisy, and Chris. After many struggles, they ended up holding positions non-academic or less academic than their American counterparts.

Adjusting Habitus

To adjust habitus, participants had to change their mindset and strategies to address the challenges they faced in the labor market. For Daisy, being selective in applying for the academic job and publishing research were her strategies. She admitted that "I was rather selective in applying for jobs. I'm also selective in publishing research." She only applied for jobs at well-known universities. She also published her research in top journals. While Ph.D. graduates often queued up for post-doctoral jobs (Andalib et al., 2018), being selective made her unique.

Knowing that he did not graduate from Ivy League universities, Chris highlighted his publication and long-established work experiences in the finance industry. He also indicated that he was willing to stay in the position for the long-term. He said:

> I was not a top candidate because I didn't graduate from an Ivy League institution, but for the business finance major, papers and publications count. I had one publication at the time. I indicated my 12-year experiences in the U.S. finance industry. Most applicants when applying for a faculty job do not have such experiences. I also showed I was going to stay

> long with the university. Universities in remote locations offer high pay, while those in urban locations offer low pay. I accepted the remote location for high pay.

For Le, Ph.D. graduates should be ready and mobile to take whatever job that could prepare them for the academic profession. She viewed that the U.S. higher education landscape was changing, so it was not always necessary to start with an elite job at a predetermined place. With experiences through different positions, she reflected:

> Applicants need to have plans A, B, and even C. While waiting for the job that one wants, the applicant should try every opportunity available in the labor market. For example, if not hired as an assistant professor, one may choose to do post-doctoral work. So, scanning for different jobs and bravery to apply for them are necessary. … . It also depends on whether doctorates are ready to move between states.

Daisy, Chris, and Le adjusted their habitus to get closer to their dream jobs. The practices they used were different, but they served the same purpose: getting an academic job. However, being "selective in applying for jobs," indicating "12-years experiences in the U.S. finance industry," "moving between states," and so on, were not always feasible options for immigrants.

As an immigrant, Joe reported that to apply for a post-doctoral fellow job was not easy given his capital, so he was fortunate to be employed. Although in academia, he was not as selective as Daisy, he had not considered as many employment options as Chris and Le, and he had zero funding; he would compensate for these weaknesses by actively publishing research. Talking about his recent chapter in a recent book, he stated that "[A]s scientist, you have to do research, even on holidays."

For Maria, because she was an immigrant and lacked much capital, she decided to become a K-12 teacher. She revealed:

> I decided to become a math teacher. I took the certifying exam in this subject. … For the first job at a secondary school, I consulted a website of a school district where I live and attended job fairs. … I had to show that I was a productive teacher. I tried to get students' learning attitudes improved. … I became a producer of values! So, I went to another job fair where I was interviewed for the current job. The production of value and creative thinking got me here [High Academy].

She had many years working in K-12 education back in her home country. She also had two publications in math education. These qualities made her a successful candidate. In the job, Maria made efforts to improve her chance to move to a higher position in the system. At the time she was interviewed, she was following a training program to become an assistant principal. She was the only participant to develop new capital for the chosen profession.

Adjusting habitus involved different practices, depending on whether the participants were immigrants and whether they were in academia. Between the American Ph.D. graduates, Daisy used practices that made her stand out while Chris and Le considered other options to successfully enter academia. Some of these options were not available for their immigrant counterparts. Between the immigrant Ph.D. graduates, Joe intensively furthered his existing capital for the academic direction while Maria developed new capital for the non-academic direction. In the new challenging field, their perceived employability drove them to self-evaluate their suitability for the supposedly academic employment. The participants were always reflexive to the field (Hurtado, 2010), either preserving it by trying to meet the requirements of the labor market or transforming it by increasing its competitiveness (Bourdieu, 2020).

Discussion

The experiences of Ph.D. graduates in turning their employability into employment outcomes highlighted the relation between capital, field, and habitus that quantitative studies (e.g., Andalib et al., 2018; Ellenbecker et al., 2017; Stenstrom et al., 2013) in the United States have hardly captured. We found that, depending on their personal circumstances and contextual factors, the participants constructed their employability through different forms of capital. Because they possessed different forms of capital, they entered the U.S. labor market with different levels of absolute employability. However, despite employability challenges, the participants were resilient, active, and reflexive in engaging their capital and finding employment.

Changing habitus to fit in with the new field is important for employment outcomes. Upon entering the labor market and finding it unfamiliar and challenging, the participants did not feel entirely at home. Bourdieu (1977, 2020) noted that the field could influence the way people think and act. If they had continued to think and act with the mindset form in the previous field (foremost, for those from overseas), they would not have functioned well in the American field with their Ph.D. degree. Therefore, in the field where they struggled more as immigrants or less as American citizens, the participants looked at their perceived employability. Based upon that, they exercised their human agency (Hurtado, 2010) to fit in better with the field. Some retreated by turning to a different profession, but the others went ahead and successfully entered academia. Once they got their positions, they continuously assessed their perceived employability based upon absolute employability to further their capital or change capital for career development. The U.S. labor market as the field, therefore, influenced how Ph.D. graduates' habitus but was simultaneously influenced by their habitus.

Given that Ph.D. graduates have different professional trajectories depending on how they navigate the labor market with the capital possessed, how should they engage in Ph.D. programs and how should higher education institutions tailor these programs? Possessing absolute or objective employability qualities does not ensure getting employed, as researchers (e.g., Brown et al., 2003; Vanhercke et al., 2014; Veld et al., 2015) have indicated. Getting a job depends on the labor market and other relevant factors (Clarke, 2018). Consequently, Ph.D. students should be clear about where they are going to work and how to prepare for work. Because the field is uncertain, preparation should not only take place before graduation; it should also take place after graduation if Ph.D. graduates are to thrive in their chosen profession. For higher education institutions, Ph.D. programs should expose students to more educational opportunities for developing their employability qualities by focusing more on research and offering more elective courses. Ph.D. students and higher education institutions should also explore opportunities to work in non-academic fields.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

The findings in this study were based on the analysis of only five Ph.D. graduates. With limited transferability of qualitative data, the experiences explored might not be true for all Ph.D. graduates in the United States. Therefore, we recommend that researchers conduct further studies with a larger number of respondents from a variety of disciplines. In these studies, researchers may adopt the inductive content analysis method or constant comparison method to derive more abstract findings and theorize the relationship between the employability qualities and employment outcomes among Ph.D. graduates.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of an increasingly competitive U.S. academic job market, the aim of this study was to understand how Ph.D. graduates translated their employability into employment outcomes through the lenses of Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field, and habitus. As the findings of the study implied, Ph.D. graduates' expertise or the cultural capital that they develop by the time they graduate is of paramount importance in securing academic employment. If they do not have sufficient capital, they must strategically react to remove obstacles and create their own advantages to be competitive in the labor market. However, because there is some capital that Ph.D. graduates who are immigrants cannot easily develop (e.g., academic relationships, language fluency, etc.), their chance to obtain desired employment diminishes. Predicated on these implications, we propose that there be more room for Ph.D. students to develop their research-related skills and familiarize themselves with different professional realities if they do not want to become academics. Concerted efforts must be made by both Ph.D. students and higher education institutions to enhance doctoral employability.

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Chapter 18
Utilizing Employability Capitals for Career Development: A Case of a Vietnamese Female Academic

Thi Phuong Thao Tran

Abstract This chapter reports a self-reflection on the career development of a Vietnamese female academic. It shows that the career development trajectory was not linear but was filled with many ups and downs. She experienced several upheavals caused by her family duties, socio-cultural practices, and stereotypes against female capability in a Confucian heritage culture. Her career identity and psychological attributes helped her a great deal in attaining her career goals. These two elements support her to exercise agency to combine the capital and resources she had to further develop the capital she was missing in order to advance in her career. This chapter ends with some recommendations on what to prepare students for their future.

Introduction

Due to dynamically changing labor markets, how graduates can obtain and grow in career role/s has been increasingly studied. Approaches and proposals on how to help graduates in this regard have evolved accordingly. Viewing employability as static sets of skills and knowledge to get a job is no longer sufficient. According to Tran et al. (2020), the notion of employability is now understood beyond "the possession of knowledge, skills, and attributes that enhance graduates to successfully obtain graduate employment" and "relevant and concrete expertise to be able to effectively apply in the context of work duties and in organizational settings." As the authors argued, employability is a process that involves developing and utilizing multiple capital and attributes during an individual's life. Aligning with this integrative and life-long learning stance, Tomlinson (2017) provided the employability capitals model that presents five dimensions of capitals: human, social, cultural, identity, and psychological to address graduate employability.

With regard to employability for postgraduate students who participate in higher education for a doctoral degree while also taking parental and familial roles, this group face unique challenges for career development (Pretorius et al., 2019; Trepal

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T. L. H. Nghia et al. (eds.), *Graduate Employability Across Contexts*,
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et al., 2014). Having been a sole-parent female academics who experienced role conflicts both before and during PhD study, I am inspired to reflect on the career path of myself to explore how building and (under)using my employability capitals affected my career development. Using self-reflection allows me to look inner and backward to critically make sense of personal experience with career development to learn from what happened and make future improvements (Tran, 2020, p. 72). It is hoped to provide insights related to the influences of using employability capitals on the wider community of sole-parent female academics/postgraduates.

This chapter provides a reflective account of my career path. First, the literature review section begins with a brief presentation of Tomlinson's (2017) graduate employability capitals and Vietnamese socio-cultural context, and role conflicts as hindrances to career development. This chapter continues with my career development narrative. Subsequently, I reflected on how my career progression was initially hindered and then enhanced in connection with my using and not using employability capital. Through this reflection section, the role of exercising my agency for the operation of capitals is highlighted. Finally, this chapter suggests measures that help support female academics and mother-students' toward advancing their career within their socio-cultural and familial constraints.

Literature Review

Capitals for Career Development

The concept of employability has been represented through various theoretical frameworks. These include but are not limited to the works of Fugate et al. (2004), Holmes (2013), and Tomlinson (2017). Despite some differences, the common theme across these works is that employability embraces multiple types of skills, personal attributes, and behaviors necessary for graduates to obtain and advance employment. Among these, Tomlinson (2017) is considered as "a constitutive and highly integrated notion of graduate employability" (Tran et al., 2020, p. 45). This section briefly presents Tomlinson's (2017) employability capital framework, which consists of five types of capital: human, social capital, cultural, identity, psychological capitals.

Human capital refers to the ability to meet the expectation of work performance for a particular occupation. It is how graduates can make the connection between "skills and knowledge," which are often acquired through formal education and training, and career outcomes (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 341). That graduates being able to apply knowledge and skills into their job performance is emphasized. Apart from generic skills and knowledge, Tomlinson (2017) draws attention to "career building knowledge" such as familiarity with the industry and awareness and exploitation of opportunities (p. 342). With this human capital, as he maintained, individuals have a higher level of competitiveness and productivity in the labor market.

Social capital means "the sum of social relationships and networks that help mobilize graduates' existing human capital and bring them closer to the labor market and its opportunity structures" (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 342). Examples of networks can be membership or connection to groups or key social actors, peers, family, or community members. This capital emphasizes the importance of building a connection with potential employers for graduates' advantage, such as gaining insights about the jobs and labor market and getting informed about employment opportunities.

Within the work context, cultural capital is "the formation of culturally valued knowledge, dispositions and behaviors that are aligned to the workplaces that graduates seek to enter" (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 343). The sub-components of this capital include graduate awareness and understanding of the rules of the company. This capital is often acquired beyond formal education, adding value to graduates' performance at work.

Identity capital is concerned with individuals' making active investments and forming the identity of desire toward their future career and employment (Tomlinson, 2017). It is about individuals' self-orientation toward whom they want to become in their profession and within the labor market. According to Tomlinson (2017), critical elements for building identity capital involve goal setting and performance and personal commitment.

Psychological capital is the ability to use strategies and resources to respond to setbacks and adversity during career paths (Tomlinson, 2017). It involves adaptability (e.g., career planning and management), resilience, flexibility, self-control, and self-efficacy. Particularly, self-efficacy, i.e., "belief about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175), is important for career development because it affects motivation and action in the initiation and persistence of behavior as well as creates self-aiding or self- hindering thoughts (Bandura, 1989; Hackett & Betz, 1981). Another aspect is the ability to (re)set and revises career goals following constant changes in the labor market (Tomlinson, 2017). Psychological capital is important because career paths and the labor market do not stay unchanged (Tomlinson, 2017).

Apart from the above categories of capitals, according to Suleman (2017), it is worth considering other factors affecting career development. These factors include social-cultural processes, e.g., social inequalities (Suleman, 2017), family and role conflicts (Beauregard, 2007; Dizaho et al., 2016), and personal attributes (Bandura, 1989; Hackett & Betz, 1981; Mustapha & Selvaraju, 2015). Reflecting on individuals' career paths with attention to multiple influencers helps obtain a better understanding of particular causes (and the combination of these causes) shaping one's career trajectories.

Role Conflicts and Career Development

Women's experiences with work have been explored through role conflict theory (Bosch, 2013; Dizaho et al., 2016; Nguyen & Tran, 2020). This theory is concerned with individuals' curtailment of time and energy to undertake more roles and responsibilities, which possibly proliferate due to tensions between conflicting priorities and desires (Marshall & Barnett, 1993). It sheds light on understanding individuals' combination of opposing roles and how individuals resolve their roles (Bosch, 2013; Utami, 2019). According to this theory, role conflict is caused when individuals take multiple roles with each role's expectations are incompatible, irrespective of time constraints or come at the cost of the other (Bosch, 2013). Dubey and Tiwari (2014) noted that since women are more likely to take household responsibilities in the family than men, family life can influence women's career in many ways, e.g., career aspirations and leadership. As a common influential factor on women's careers, work-family is evident when women's participation in work roles is competed by the family role and vice versa (Dizaho et al., 2016). Three dimensions of work-family conflict are time, strain d behavioral-based conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Research findings show that family duties such as childcare and cultural expectations within the family, emotional, mental, and physical tiredness negatively affect working mothers' career development (Dizaho et al., 2016; Dubey & Tiwari, 2014; Yusuf & Hasnidar, 2020). Nguyen and Tran (2020) added that whether or not the share of domestic responsibilities by a family member, i.e., husband, can influence the extent to which women can achieve work-life balance and career performance. As they argue, working women's family roles do not oppose the work roles when the husband shows care for the wife and collaborates in child-raising and household chores.

With the increase of women participation in academia worldwide, working women's role conflicts are recently examined in relation to the experience of women who are both a doctoral student and a mother, i.e., PhD student mothers (Bosch, 2013; Trepal et al., 2014; Utami, 2019). Juggling multiple hardships can hinder PhD student mothers' careers and/or study. For example, they have to deal with children-related responsibilities alongside building profiles for job security and managing their financial concerns (Trepal et al., 2014). Additionally, they are more likely to be less desirable hires and have fewer opportunities for career development and academic funding opportunities than male and childless counterparts (Cuddy et al., 2004, as cited in Trepal et al., 2014). The double roles of a PhD student and motherhood create competing demands that cause conflicts in terms of time, energy, and pressure (Utami, 2019). The fact that PhD experience contains significant stress and anxiety and requires huge effort and time can potentially magnify PhD student mothers' hardships (Pretorius et al., 2019). Combining the two "time-consuming" roles makes it hardly possible for PhD student mothers to fully resolve and balance personal and professional demands, leading to overload and threatening the mother's well-being (Haynes et al., 2012; Utami, 2019, p. 79).

Career Development for Women in Vietnamese Socio-Cultural Context

Vietnam is a Confucian heritage country with Confucian ideology influential on many life aspects. Regarding the roles of women in society, this ideology underestimates women's roles in many ways. It emphasizes women's roles as daughters, mothers, and wives and their obedience to moral rules: obeying the father before marriage, the husband when married, and the eldest son when widowed (Grosse, 2015). Moreover, women have to follow the four female virtues (tứ đức): morality, proper speech, modest manner, diligent work, and other prescribed values (Vu, 2019). They take more responsibilities in taking care of children, domestic chores, family and consider supporting husband and in-law family, homemaking their main life purpose (Nguyen & Simkin, 2017; Vu, 2019). They also face family expectations of giving birth to sons and the unfair treatment in relationship with mother-in-law (Drummond, 2006; Vu, 2019). Furthermore, the women who divorce and remarry face strong social prejudices (Grosse, 2015; Vu, 2019). According to Werner (2009), these long-established features limit women's space of acting, leading to their disadvantages in comparison to men.

In the modern Vietnamese society, since the Communist Party resolution of Reforms (Đổi Mới) in 1986, people's lifestyles have been transformed to be more modern, and due to the demand for modernization, more women participate in work. However, Grosse (2015) pointed out that although Communist ideology has aimed to enhance women's status in society through many channels, e.g., policies, laws, propaganda, education, gender inequality is not actually changed. This is probably because the above "one-thousand-year-old" ideology is deeply rooted in people's minds (Vu, 2019).

In terms of career development for women, a number of studies have found that constraints related to family prevent women from thriving in careers. For example, in the higher education setting, Nguyen (2013) found that women leadership advancement at work was obstructed mainly by strong family obligations, negative gender stereotypes regarding females as leaders, and their own unwillingness to take management positions. As she argued, family support is crucial for female academic career advancement in Vietnam. Research also reports that women who achieve professional, social, or political success but do not successfully manage their family are critiqued by family members (Nguyen, 2013; Nguyen & Simkin, 2017; Schuler et al., 2006; Vu (2019) added that women's career success is disregarded if they fail to perform mother and wife roles. These indicate that socio-cultural context creates major obstacles for Vietnamese women's career development.

My Career Development Narrative

I graduated from university in late 2004 and started my career as an English lecturer at the same university. I completed all required tertiary teaching tests and was granted a permanent full-time lecture position by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2006. Following the career path usually taken by previous colleagues, I sought postgraduate scholarships to study overseas. Although I won several fully funded scholarships, I took the Australian Awards for a one-year Master of Education course in Australia between 2008 and 2009. That course focused on teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). Briefly, within five years (2004–2009), my career made important progress.

After returning to Vietnam in mid-2009, I continued my role as a lecturer of English at the same university. With my Master's degree, I was assigned to teach English-majored students instead of non-English-majored students as I used to. I was involved in more professional activities, which I did not do before, such as developing curriculum, supervising students' Bachelor's thesis, and participating in some research projects with colleagues. Apart from teaching duties, I took part in youth union activities for young teachers at my faculty. As a result of this, I was appointed to be the Secretary of Teachers' Youth Union (*Bí thư Chi đoàn cán bộ*). Some of my responsibilities included organizing youth and community activities for teachers, such as visiting trips to the elderly centers, orphanages, raising funds, organizing seminars to support younger teachers about scholarship application and English preparation. I also helped with coaching students' youth activities at the faculty.

I got married in early 2010 and lived with my husband in his extended family. After that, I gave birth to my child in mid-2011. In terms of career, I completed my assigned teaching responsibility at its usual requirements in my role as a lecturer. I refused to take teaching tasks that required me to travel far from home and tasks that required high commitment. I also withdrew from my role as a Secretary of Teachers' Youth Union. Between 2013 and 2014, I encountered family complications and got divorced.

After that, I decided to study for a doctoral degree abroad. Therefore, I made plans to prepare for it. I reviewed and built a CV. After I took the IELTS test, I sought admissions to doctoral degree programs and scholarships. During this stage, I consulted some senior lecturer colleagues in my school and former lecturers in Australia. They shared their experience of doctoral study overseas and acted as my referees in all applications. I got my doctoral scholarship from the Ministry of Education and Training in early 2015. Following this, I prepared for departure. I consulted friends in New Zealand for personal advice regarding accommodation, schools, childcare services, and life in New Zealand. I (and my child) left Vietnam for New Zealand in September 2015.

I settled in and started my program straight away after the first week at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW). My study and life routine were not the same during each stage of my study. However, my typical day for thesis work started from 9 a.m.

to 3 p.m. to match my child's school time for the convenience of dropping and picking her up from school. Within these working hours in the office, I tried to get as much thesis work done as possible. Additionally, I took part in campus activities such as weekly seminars, public lectures, postgraduate workshops, writing camps, thesis group meetings, and voluntary work at my school (e.g., helper in university open day, university orientation week, career hub expo, weekly seminars, and annual conferences held at my school). Apart from these, I took casual jobs at the campus and outside the campus. I competed for each milestone task, submitted my thesis, passed its oral defense examination, and completed my course within the PhD time frame as planned.

Reflections: What Hindered and Enhanced My Career Development?

My unfolded career narrative reveals some connections between the exercising of employability capitals and the success or failure during my career development trajectory. To be specific, the delay in my career progress was perceived to be caused by not using the necessary capital. On the contrary, my noticeable career achievements (i.e., completion) were the results of using relevant capitals. Through my trajectory, psychological capital (i.e., personal adaptability and resilience) and identity capital constantly remedied adversities and barriers, which were made up of multiple role conflicts. Social capital also helped to create a supportive network prior to departure and during my study trip overseas. The following section elaborates on what was not successful and then what was successful in my career development and why it was so.

Hindrances of My Career Development Between 2010 and 2013

Between 2010 and 2013, I did not obtain meaningful career achievements. Reflecting on this gap, it appears that a lack of exercising types of employability capital impeded my ability to resolve career barriers and my family-to-work conflicts to advance my career. For example, I hesitated to take highly responsible tasks at university. I was not confident in my capability to fulfill highly responsible tasks at work while dealing with multiple familial constraints at the same time. Another gap was that I did not sufficiently maintain professional aspiration during my transition to married life and motherhood. After marriage, I reduced my involvement in university activities such as Youth Union Secretary and restricted the types of professional responsibilities I could take. Giving up this role meant that I loosened communication with many colleagues and withdrew from a range of community activities. Marginalizing this type of collective communication, I missed potential sources of occupational aspiration, which, as Fugate et al. (2004) argued, are beneficial to career development. Neglecting setting career goals coupled with lacking professional aspiration hindered my use of human capital for career development. I unconsciously did not make the best use of my acquired knowledge and skills from my Master's study to advance my career and community involvement.

My not using employability capitals for the sake of career progress between 2010 and 2013 happened for two main reasons. First, the external factor, i.e., social-cultural context, discouraged my career-related self-aiding behaviors. I was made intimidated by the common social critique and prejudice that women's success at work would mean nothing if they failed to handle family issues (Schuler et al., 2006; Nguyen, 2013; Nguyen & Simkin, 2017). In concordance with this thought, during my transition to new family roles such as motherhood and in the middle of family complications, it was more likely for me to prioritize family roles over work roles. In Vietnam, family support plays a vital role in women's career success (Nguyen, 2013). It is not common for working women to access career-related support from professional mentoring programs or professional associations. Lack of familial and profession-related support, I found it true in my case that the likelihood of effective performance at work role is reduced due to tension, tiredness, anxiety, and depression from family role (Greenhaus & Beautell, 1985) and those heavy duties in the family cause hesitation to take high professional responsibilities due to lack of time to engage in them (Dizaho et al., 2016). Referring to Bourdieu's concepts of social field (the context in which I function with its own rules and regulations) and habitus (my way of thinking and behaving) (Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), it is clear that my habitus was heavily impacted by the social-cultural standards and expectations.

Secondly, the above socio-cultural and family barriers and lack of profession-related mentoring curbed my self-efficacy expectation, which is a form of agency (Bandura, 1989). By means of keeping confining with social norms imposed on women's familial obligations and dealing with my own family complications, I realized that lack of confidence caused me to underestimate my daring to take up challenges at work. It is significant to acknowledge my lack of self-efficacy because, according to Nguyen (2013), this it reduces women's readiness to come forward in the career. Moreover, since self-efficacy is considered as a primary psychological determinant of behavior persistence (Hackett & Betz, 1981), my lack of self-efficacy expectation blocked my career motivation and thus prevented me from recognizing my career strengths, e.g., academic knowledge and skills (human capital). I self-hindered my attempt in maintaining the collegial network, setting specific short-term and long-term goals, which are elements of Tomlinson's (2017) social, identity, and psychology capitals.

Analyzing my 2010 and 2013 career period leads me to the realization of my double-leveled lacks. At the more observable level, my lack of utilizing employability capital significantly impeded my career achievements. At a deeper level, my socio-cultural context indirectly hindered me from exercising agency, i.e., self-efficacy expectation, to actuate my operation of existing capitals for career progress. As a consequence of both these two kinds of short-comings, my employability capitals were neither used nor built up between 2010 and 2013. To further understand the connection between the use of employability capitals and the viability to cope with adversity, in the following section, I reflected on how my utilization of employability capitals helped me to resolve barriers during my PhD candidature.

Building and Utilization of Employability Capitals for Career Development

Preparing for and studying the doctoral program challenged me in many ways. Reflecting on this, I observed that my use of combined capital, with some kinds of capital more prominently used than others, enhanced my ability to resolve role conflicts and adapt to associated challenges. This indicates the significance of using capitals one's career trajectory.

Human Capital Enabling PhD Preparation and Completion

Upon my return to Vietnam from Australia in mid-2009, I had acquired skills and knowledge in TESOL, for instance, curriculum design, language skill assessment, understandings of second language acquisition, skills in research, critical thinking, independent learning, academic writing, teamwork, and leadership. Within six months of my return to Vietnam, such knowledge and skills enabled me to participate in highly responsible teaching tasks and youth tasks in my department. In doing so, I was able to use human capital by connecting formal training from the Master's study in Australia and specific requirements at my workplace (Tomlinson, 2017).

In 2014, when I realized I need to grow in my career, I decided to pursue a doctoral degree overseas. I identified the above-acquired knowledge and skills as my advantages for me to resolve that need. Therefore, I was positive that I could prepare myself well to gain a PhD admission and funding. With that self-efficacy expectation, I planned a course of action to carry out. Self-directive utilization of the above knowledge and skills helped me manage each action well. For example, my CV was gradually enriched with initial achievements such as university journal papers and conference proceeding papers. Later, I continued to make use of my human capital—skills and knowledge in TESOL—holistically to complete my PhD research proposal, data collection, data analysis, thesis submission, thesis oral defense examination, and the whole PhD journey. Each of these tasks during the PhD study required different types of skills and knowledge to perform. Therefore, it remains clear that the process of using my human capital to perform these academic tasks involved my learning, building, and enriching my human capital. In light of the employability capital framework, graduates' ability to maintain learning at work helps to sharpen human capital (Tran et al., 2020, p. 48).

I realize that the impact of my human capital during my doctoral journey was beyond the conferred doctoral qualification. Apart from thesis work, I joined my supervisors in several published works and conference presentations. As the journey went at VUW, my constant use of human capital to participate in academic activities such as seminars, public lectures and thesis group round-table discussions, and chatting with international visiting scholars increased my academic knowledge and research skill. Participating in these academic activities helped individuals like me to make sense of international academia, and I saw myself making small steps closer to it (Nguyen, 2012, p. 97). This point nurtured my motivation to pursue my wished identity as a well-qualified academic.

Although the PhD study was a process of facing different kinds of academic challenges in different research phases, I was most of the time positive that a PhD mission was not something impossible. When encountering different academic challenges or blocks, thanks to my self-efficacy, I maintained being passionate and calm so that I could make use of human capital to resolve any challenge when it arose. Generally, my human capital contributed immensely to my career progression. The more I used it, the more I earned it.

Social and Cultural Capitals Resulting in Supportive Networks

Using my social and cultural capitals enabled my PhD preparation and created my supportive network during different career stages, which resulted in my achievements for each course of planned action. For example, I knew tasks associated with preparing for postgraduate study in Western universities such as proposal writing, supervisor and grant/scholarship seeking since I studied in Australia. Then, recommendations and sharing of knowledge and professional experience from colleagues in Vietnam and former lecturers in Australia helped me to go through the PhD admission process. These, together with the support from my university leaders, enabled me to obtain my scholarship in the 2014–2015 period.

In a new country, navigating the culture and the educational environment of the university was an important task of a PhD life. This task involves understanding the communication of people participating in it. According to Gizir and Simsek (2005), the characteristics of communication within an academic context such as university contain work-related communication problems and general department communication problems. My social and cultural capitals enhanced my navigation and integration into the multicultural educational context at VUW during my PhD student-hood. Having studied in an English-speaking academic environment in Australia brought me some cultural experiences in talking with people as well as knowledge about academia and learning style in Western universities. Therefore, I was willing to interact with people and open to cultural differences from the first day when my supervisor introduced me to people. To better understand academic life and culture at VUW, I participated in campus activities, including weekly school seminars, thesis group meetings, postgraduate training workshops, open lectures, hub career expos, catching up with visiting scholars, multicultural lunch shares, school holiday BBQ, student association activities, and staff morning tea catch-ups. I also voluntarily helped in university Open Day, university orientation weeks, and school event organization. Through these activities, I did not limit myself to "co- or similar-ethnic communities" (Tran et al., 2020, p. 48) but expanded myself to diverse internationals' nationalities with the hope to enrich myself with intercultural sensitivity, global mindedness, and international networks. What I did was matched with Tran et al.'s (2020) suggestion that building social relationships with both co-nationals, diverse internationals, and locals of the host country optimize graduates' multiple soft skills and cultural capital useful for graduates' career progression.

Another aspect of the educational workplace context for doctoral students is the student-supervisor communication. This relationship can have a significant influence on any PhD student's journey because a good student-supervisor relationship helps develop the students' research competencies through supervision style, mutual understandings of expectations and circumstances from both sides in relation to study (Utami, 2019). In handling the relationship with my academic supervisor academic, which is very different from the Vietnamese one (Robertson & Nguyen, 2020), I made use of my awareness of cross-cultural differences in terms of learning and academic styles, communication styles (e.g., negotiation skills), the lecturer-student power distance since I studied in Australia. I received immense support, recommendations, and guidance from supervisors thanks to my strong relationship with them.

By means of the above activities and awareness, I could simultaneously use and develop social and cultural capital. For example, from my participation in the student association's work-ready workshops, I was taught about communication styles in the New Zealand multicultural workplace context, such as the use of small talks, the indirect way of making requests. I applied these insights to my communication with staff, supervisors, and PhD friends at VUW. My frequent socializing with international students and staff at my school at VUW brought me "first-hand knowledge and information about job" (Tomlinson, 2017). I was recommended for a contract teaching job in a language center and casual campus jobs. More importantly, my informal network with international friends network gave me both academic and non-advice. We also supported each other by taking turns to pick up our children from school. This allowed me not to miss campus activities when parenting duties such as child picking up would prevent me from.

I found that the networks, which were harnessed using my understandings of multicultural educational workplace context and communication strategies, optimized my engagement in academic relationships and life relationships. I realized that through both formal and informal professional networks, which according to Tomlinson (2017), can build more significant cultural capital, I gained socio-cultural knowledge about the host country and the host university and confidence in intercultural communication. With these supportive relationships, I could seek the right people to get the right support at the right time. My sense of belonging to a multicultural academic community was therefore nurtured.

I was able to intentionally exercise my social and cultural capitals because I am personally interested in intercultural communication and had encountered cultural shocks when I studied in Australia. For this interest and reflection of previous cultural shocks, my PhD thesis was focusing on the intercultural dimension of English language teaching and learning. These self-aiding elements set me to continually use and develop my social and cultural capitals to make the best of studying overseas. Similar to the case of my human capital, as previously mentioned, the more I used my social and cultural capital, the more I developed them.

Identity Capital Setting Light Through Adversity

My identity capital set the light on my transition to my PhD journey. In 2014, when I realized my need to grow in my career as a university lecturer, I visualized that I would become an academically qualified lecturer who had a doctoral qualification and rich multicultural exposure. This expected identity aligned with the fact that in Vietnam, having a PhD qualification from developed countries would help earn more respect from people and family (Robertson & Nguyen, 2020). This imagined identity drove me to seriously look inner on who I was. I was an independent woman who loved academia and stood in stark contrast to the Confucian ideology regarding its underestimating females. Such reflective thinking and articulation of the desired career identity motivated me to represent myself academically by means of improving my CV, an account of my identity (Tomlinson, 2017). In Bourdieu's (1977) view, this is when the I started to "renew" my habitus, i.e., their way of thinking and acting, by linking the current experience with the past experiences and looking forward into the future.

Identity capital continued to enhance my perseverance between 2015 and 2019. It drove me to keep on track with varied academic tasks in each PhD phase, set goals, and reflect on each achievement against long term goal. The sense of moving toward my wished identity as a qualified academic gave the door to optimism and determination during difficult phases of the study. Moreover, as my PhD journey went, my identity capital continued to develop. This developmental process was observed in dimensions such as "thinking about myself as, performing as" an engaging academic (McAlpine et al., 2009, as cited in Nguyen, 2012, p. 97). I participated in the academic community like other PhD students, such as thesis group meetings and professional school seminars, and taking tasks such as participating in supervisors' book project and presenting at conferences. In other words, my development of identity capital at VUW involved doing what other international academics often do in a university environment to reach something "identical" to what other academics have in my profession (Franziska Trede et al., 2012, as cited in Tran et al., 2020).

I was also confident in my capability to achieve that identity of choice. Such self-efficacy expectation enabled me to exercise identity capital to take good control over my barriers (e.g., work-family role conflict and PhD student-mother role conflict). I treated my competing demands and role conflicts as catalysts instead of barriers to avoid being passively knocked down by them. I was more willing to take highly responsible tasks instead of refusing them due to personal circumstances as a single parent PhD student. This strategy enabled me to gain trust from supervisors in my academic ability so as to fit in the academic community at VUW. I realized that my willingness to take up challenging tasks, confidence in my task performance, and optimism contributed very much to the transformation of my professional self from a local to a more global academic at VUW. How my career identity was constructed above confirms the emphasis on the importance of graduates' confidence and efficacy, effort invested in career, values, exchanges, and interactions (i.e., social engagement) with other members (Cote, 2005, Holmes, 2013; as cited in Tomlinson, 2017).

Psychology Capital Ensuring Career Objectives

Using my psychology capital extended my comfort zone, which increased my flexibility and adaptability in solving problems and coping with challenges both before and during my PhD study. My flexibility was shown in the PhD preparation and pre-departure stages. For instance, when practicing for the IELTS test and writing journal papers and research proposals for the purpose of building a CV and applying for the scholarship, I took every short break between my teaching periods at university to read and write. Since my university did not offer an office workstation for lecturers, I sought any seat in the library and teachers' tea room to do snack writing. As initial achievements, I got some papers published in my university journal and some conference proceedings. Furthermore, because I planned to carry my child overseas with me, I taught double load (i.e., both daytime and evening classes) to prepare myself financially. It appears that, in this stage, flexibility and adaptability helped me to organize time efficiently and get multiple career-related tasks done alongside my family duties.

Financial hardship, which intensified role conflict between the postgraduate-student and sole-parent roles by sources of strain and mental health risks (Bosch, 2013; Chandler, 2010; Trepal et al., 2014), was one of the biggest setbacks I resolved during years overseas thanks to using my psychology capital. I was able to exercise elements of resilience and adaptability to "exert a degree of influence on (my) situation" (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012, p. 339). For instance, I shared the house with other families who also had kids of my child's age. Sharing space means sharing comfort. Nevertheless, I facilitated kids to play with each other and invited adult housemates to take turns to supervise kids playing. Also, I took casual jobs that allowed timing flexibility, such as Vietnamese language instructor, English home tutor for migrants, exam supervisor, and domestic cleaner and babysitter. To compensate for the setbacks of taking casual works, I planned my weeks ahead for both academic and non-academic activities, making extra time for thesis work at weekends. Well-designed daily and weekly routines ensured my small and milestone objectives and achievement and thus helped me to meet the competing demand of doctoral study, sole parenting, and casual jobs.

I found that my specific strategies of sharing houses, taking casual jobs, and organizing routines effectively added to my challenge management ability. These strategies to cope with challenges opened up to new experiences and understanding of local culture through communication with people I worked with. Because my PhD thesis focused on developing intercultural communication competence in English as a Foreign Language education, I regarded my improved understanding, communication exposure to the local culture in New Zealand, which was apart from my university campus life, useful for myself and my study. As noted in Tran et al. (2020, p. 53), the challenge management ability, especially when it involves learning from novel experiences, is an important aspect of psychology capital for a graduate to succeed across work lives and transitions.

Zooming in and out the whole career path, what I regret was that I did not understand my multiple capitals and wasted them by not using them adequately between 2010 and 2013. In other words, lack of awareness and application of necessary capitals, I left my career in this stage negatively compromised by personal life problems. Contrary to that, between 2014 and 2019, my use of capital helped me to achieve short-term and long-term career objectives. My PhD success was the result of sufficient exercise of multiple capitals: human, social, cultural, identity, and psychology capitals in all study phases. The operation of these capitals, which was the result of my self-efficacy and self-effort in general, drove me to exploit internal and external resources so that I could balance multiple competing demands of the hard journey to advance my career. This insight from my narrative confirms Nguyen's (2013, p. 132) finding that Vietnamese female academics based their academic and subsequently their career success on their individual efforts and abilities. As I realized, the more I used capitals, the more I built them. They were not static entities (Tran et al., 2020).

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter, I reflected on what underpinned my career ups and downs to gain insights into why I failed and succeeded. Growing in Vietnam, my habitus, i.e., my thinking and acting, was strongly affected by the social field of Vietnam, with its social-cultural standards and norms, imposed on women. Thus, during the 2010–2023 periods, I did not make any progress in my academic career front just because I need to meet duties of being a wife and a mom. Only when I critically self-assessed my situation and envisioned my future did I started to change my habitus. I exercised agency to build and use multiple types of capitals and the effective use of these capitals brought me achievements along my way. I found a strong link between my agency to win socio-cultural and familial circumstances that held me back and the ability to activate and use capitals. I realized that the more I used the capitals, the more I developed them.

A number of recommendations are made based on my experience. First, it is necessary for female graduates to be informed about the employability capital framework regardless they have already got a job or not. Because career development is not linear, awareness and knowledge about this kind of framework will provide them with a tool to understand their employment attributes as well as to monitor how they may use them for the sake of long-term career progression. Such knowledge will be helpful for them in that they have a general reference from which they can base their career reflection on. I propose that it would be meaningful for universities in Vietnam to include content about employability capitals in their human resource development related activities with the aim to raise female academics' awareness about their employability capitals, support and encourage them not only toward the pursuit of postgraduate study, construction of professional identity but also their long-term career advancement.

Second, in handling socio-cultural and familial constraints to thrive in a career, it is important for women to exercise their agency for the purpose of activating their employability capitals. It is suggested that they recognize their strengths and develop a strong sense of self-efficacy expectation with regard to specific career-related objectives. Missing exercising this internal attribute, female academics/mother-students waste their employability capitals by unconsciously not utilizing them enough and as such self-hinder their career. That is to say, women taking responsibility and self-effort for their career advancement is crucial. More research on women's career development should be done to study the impacts of female academics and mother-students' exercising agency on their activating, utilizing, and building of employability capitals.

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Part V
Conclusion

Chapter 19
Reconceptualization of Graduate Employability for Career Advancement

Vinh N. Lu, Tran Le Huu Nghia, Binh Chi Bui, and Jasvir Kaur Nachatar Singh

Abstract Through the lens of Bourdieu's social field, habitus, and capital, in this chapter, we analyze the empirical chapters reported earlier in this book to highlight key issues related to employability perspectives, initiatives, and translation of employability capital into employment outcomes and career advancement. We argue that employability is a lifelong process of continuously building up and utilizing capital through significant interactions between an individual and contextual factors. We critique the limitations of the skill-based approach to develop employability for students based on the findings. We also highlight three conceptual frameworks depicting (1) the relationship between types of employability capital, (2) the connection between employability, employment outcomes, and career development, and (3) employability as a lifelong process. These frameworks contribute to informing policy, research, and practice in the field of graduate employability and career development.

Introduction

In the previous chapters, the authors have presented different viewpoints and initiatives on the development of student employability across different higher education contexts, be it a discipline, an institution, or a system. These chapters have

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also reported how stakeholders engage with the employability agenda and graduates' experience with translating their employability into employment outcomes and career development. Generally, these chapters indicate a diversity of perspectives towards employability; thus, when put into practice, they create different employability development initiatives and different levels of stakeholders' engagement, particularly in unfavorable conditions. Such differing perspectives, personal characteristics, and contextual factors also explain the disparities in how graduates secure their employment opportunities and shape their career development paths. This chapter will summarize the key findings from this book project and discuss the future employability agenda in higher education. The chapter begins with an overview of the perspectives and initiatives to develop graduate employability, arguing for the need to reconceptualize and advance the employability agenda. It then discusses the approaches that the higher education sector can undertake to improve the effectiveness of implementing the employability agenda. Limitations and suggestions for future studies are also an important section of this chapter, paving the way for further research in graduate employability.

Perspectives, Initiatives, and Stakeholders' Engagement with the Employability Agenda: The Influence of the Social Field and Habitus

This book project finds that graduate employability is a loosely defined concept as different stakeholders have different perspectives toward it. Commonly, they seem to consider graduate employability as the possession of sets of skills that enable graduates to succeed in the labor market and thrive in their careers. The majority of empirical studies included in this book more or less identified skills that distinguish employable from unemployable graduates. On top of specialized skills of each discipline, common skills perceived to enhance graduates' employability are communication, interpersonal, teamwork, problem-solving, and career management skills, among others. Such a focus on skills is aligned with Holmes's (2013) notion that graduate employability as possession of skills is the dominant perspective in the literature about graduate employability. It also appears that perspectives toward graduate employability are affected by personal and contextual factors. For example, in Chap. 3, the authors found some influence of institutional types on the selection of knowledge and skills to develop for business students in four Australian universities. Despite some similarities, research-focused universities appeared to articulate the expected learning outcomes, which reflect their perspectives about what may make their graduates employable, with a focus on research or academic abilities. Vocation-oriented universities aimed for innovation, entrepreneurship, and social impact in the region. Thus, on top of technical knowledge and skills, they paid much attention to developing non-technical skills or soft skills to enhance their graduates to achieve the mentioned purposes. In Chap. 5, the author explored students', graduates', and academics' perceptions of what enhances Indian IT students' career prospects. The author found that while academics placed importance on human capital and identity capital, students/graduates considered social capital as key for their career development. Such differences in their perceptions can be attributed to the position they were in. Academics often value academic aspects and prepare students for long-term development, whereas students and graduates look into employability as something that makes them obtain employment as fast as possible upon graduation.

Existing literature suggests a diversity of initiatives to develop employability for students (Bridgstock & Jackson, 2019; Kinash et al., 2016; Tran, 2019). Although this book cannot examine all of these initiatives, studies included in the book have depicted the status quo of the employability agenda in different higher education contexts. Generally, evidence suggests that there has been an increasing investment into realizing the value of the employability agenda in higher education in many countries despite differences in progress. Consistent with the literature (e.g., Bonnard, 2020; Römgens et al., 2020), initiatives adopted to develop employability for students are centered around the skill-based, often used interchangeably with a competency-based approach. This approach articulates the skills students are expected to achieve following their completion of a course or program (i.e., attaining the expected learning outcomes). The advantage of this approach is that it shows students what skills they need to develop to meet academic requirements and subsequently future employers' demands. This book further shows that under the skill-based approach, institutions selected and embedded a number of important employability skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, problem-solving) into the academic curriculum or design co-curricular to deliver these skills if it is not allowed to do so within the main curriculum, use internship and other work-integrated learning forms, or encourage students to participate in extra-curricular activities. However, it is critiqued that the skill-based approach may not be relevant and sustainable; it may not necessarily develop employability skills for students; and it places the responsibility of succeeding in securing employment completely on students, ignoring other labor market factors (Bonnard, 2020; Holmes, 2013). Many scholars are suggesting some alternative reconceptualization of graduate employability, taking into account the role of students' social positioning and the professional identity (Bonnard, 2020; Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2016; Römgens et al., 2020). In their views, such reconceptualization of graduate employability can better accommodate students' learning needs, advance the employability agenda, and better explain the differences in employment outcomes among graduates from different social classes, gender, and minority groups.

In this book, the authors also provided some evidence suggesting a move beyond the skill-based approach. Stakeholders appeared to concern about graduates' long-term career development, well beyond the initial securing of employment after graduation. For example, the authors of Chap. 6 showed that hospitality graduates and employers in Vietnam articulated the need to equip current students with career planning and management skills. This set of skills appears to be meta-cognition and meta-skills enabling students to engage with the ongoing development of skills/ capital for their future careers. From employers' perspective, the study reported in Chap. 12 also showed that not only did they look for skills that match the job description from graduates, they also emphasized other capabilities and traits that enable graduates to adapt and thrive at the workplace. Likewise, the way some institutions implemented the employability agenda suggested their efforts to help students anticipate the unknown future and manage their careers. For example, in Chap. 3, the authors identified that four Australian universities used different methods to deliver selected skills to students (e.g., internships, study tours, exchange programs, or other extra-curricular activities). These activities not only polish these skills but can also develop cultural capital, social capital, and professional identity, as noted in many previous studies (Gault et al., 2010; Rothman & Sisman, 2016; Tran & Nguyen, 2018). In the same manner, in Chap. 9, a Malaysian university, on top of core research skills, organized activities to facilitate the development of postgraduate international students' cultural competence and personal attributes to cope with non-academic issues while nurturing their leadership skills.

The research reported in this book further shows that stakeholders' engagement with such initiatives varied from one context to another. At the systemic level, there have been employability-related policies requiring universities in Ethiopia, Vietnam, and Malaysia to prepare students for their careers. However, institutions are responding differently to such policies. In Ethiopia (see Chap. 7), while the policy directions recognize the need to develop graduate employability, many institutions appear not to be ready to respond to employers' expectations and labor market demands. The author found that the current structures, systems, and learning experiences within and outside the university negatively impacted the institutional capacity to drive the progress of the employability agenda in their institution. In the case of Vietnamese universities, generic employability skills development programs have been executed following the command from the central government for more than a decade, but the progress has been slow (see Chap. 8). Despite sharing a similar conceptualization of generic employability skills, these universities translated it into practice quite differently, particularly in terms of implementation scale, the strategies, and pedagogical practices through which generic skills are imparted to students. This appeared to depend very much on the resources/capital they had: experience of the educators, curriculum autonomy, university leadership, and connection with external stakeholders. At the institutional level, stakeholders also engaged with the employability agenda at different levels. Within the curriculum, educators did not teach employability skills due to a lack of confidence, expertise, incentives and management systems, or practicality issues such as inadequate time and large class size. Regarding extra-curricular activities, organizers' engagement with their leadership role was influenced by the institution's policy and investment (see Chap. 8), whereas students did not engage because they favor curriculum-based activities (see Chap. 11). For employability development activities related to work-integrated learning, employers and professionals hesitated to get involved due to a lack of connection with the university, their work schedule, and experience in supervising students (see Chapters 8 and 10). While many students appreciated such experiential learning, others only participated at a superficial level to pass the course rather than taking advantage of this learning opportunity (see Chap. 8).

The disparities in perspectives, initiatives, and stakeholder engagement with the employability agenda can be explained through the theoretical lens of Bourdieu's social field and habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The social field can be simply understood as the social environment in which people function. It "consists of a set of objective historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 16). Individuals' ways of thinking and acting are often shaped by the social field in which they function, termed "habitus" by Bourdieu. Higher education stakeholders may function in different social fields, with some cross between them, such as the society at large, the higher education sector, the institution, the faculty, and the discipline. Each of these social fields has its norms, conventions, traditions, and regulations that people often refer to or comply with when they think and act. Because employers focus on the efficiency of their organizational operations, they may look into employability as skills that help sustain their businesses and improve revenues. A student may perceive employability as an enabler for them to get entry to a dream job, which will bring them private returns on their educational investment. Educators from higher education institutions are concerned about how to help develop well-rounded people for the society; therefore, they may also take into account the skills that help graduates to become active social agents. Policymakers may think about the measures to evaluate or manage the implementation of employability so as to generate evidence and evaluate the effectiveness of their policy. Similar rules may apply to stakeholders from different cultures, higher education systems, and disciplines. Consequently, there are disparities in perspectives about employability among higher education stakeholders.

In developing employability, it appears that the social field affected stakeholders' habitus in adopting/designing the initiatives that higher education institutions launched. Although within-curricular activities are becoming preferred in preparing career-readiness for students due to government policies (Chapters 7–9), sometimes academics attributed the duty to extra-curricular activity organizers, not theirs, just because they see that these activities have been used for skills development purpose for long (Chapters 8 and 10). For students, their habitus of focusing much on formal learning affect their engagement with informal learning opportunities such as extra-curricular activities to develop soft skills for them (Chap. 10). In addition, the implementation of the employability agenda appeared to depend on the availability of resources: staff expertise, connection to industry stakeholders, financial support, etc. This is understandable because institutions can only adopt strategies most feasible, considering their institutional context. For students, the extent to which they engage with a type of employability development activity not only depended on their perceived relevance of the activity but also depended on how much they can get access to it regarding time and cost. Following the explanation in Bourdieu (1990), when there is harmony in the stakeholders' thinking and behaviors and the environment, they are like "fish in water"; otherwise, they would struggle with implementing the employability agenda. Caution their strategies, with careful consideration of existing capital, is safe for their functioning within the higher education social field.

However, habitus is not rigidly structured, but it is subject to constant changes (James et al., 2015). It can be "objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 54). In order for habitus to change, there must be a link between the "*subjective* habitus and the *objective* world of other people and things" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 83). In the case of the employability agenda, the "other people" can be employers, students, colleagues, skills experts, policy-makers, institutional leaders who may hold different beliefs. The other "things" can be materials, resources, or capital in Bourdieu's word, that individuals use to execute the agenda in their role. This can explain why in some cases employability is conceptualized as sets of skills; however, when implemented, it includes the development of graduates' long-term careers, as discussed earlier. The changing nature of habitus is the basis for improving stakeholders' engagement with the employability agenda, contributing to its advancement. Therefore, higher education stakeholders need to be expose to different employability viewpoints and development initiatives as well as access to relevant resources. These are good conditions for their employability-related habitus to change and may contribute to the move forward to the agenda.

In short, it is difficult for all higher education stakeholders to gain a consensus on what skills are needed for graduate employability due to the differences in their role and social fields. In the current context of higher education, there is a lack of opportunities for interactive fora and discussions for all relevant stakeholders (Barrie et al., 2009). Even when they can do so, the constantly changing labor market demand means the skills required for employability will continue to evolve over time. Likewise, each stakeholder may have access to different types of resources or capital and differ in how they engage with the graduate employability agenda. As such, perhaps it is best to move beyond the skill-based approach to employability; we should embrace a more holistic conceptualization and approach to realizing it such as seeing it as a lifelong process of developing and utilizing capital, as to be reported below. Having the concept right may help to improve the execution of the agenda, despite differences in the initiatives adopted by each institution, program, or stakeholder.

The Translation of Graduate Employability to Employment Outcomes and Career Development

One of the most important contributions of this book project is that it investigated the translation of employability capital into employment outcomes and career development. Existing research has mostly focused on examining employability skills needed to secure a job or develop a future career, but there is a lack of studies that show how graduates utilize employability capital for such purposes. In this regard, this book project reveals a number of insights useful for improving the employability agenda in higher education and for career development research.

First, employability capital or skills that graduates have developed by the time of graduation do not spontaneously translate themselves into employment outcomes. Tangible evidence of employability, such as credentials, years of work experience (if any), family background, physical appearance, etc., may not automatically help graduates to land a job, especially when there are many job applicants with similar employability packages. Graduates must be able to effectively demonstrate their employability skills/capital in a way that prospective employers feel confident or convinced of their ability to undertake the advertised job efficiently and potential for future development (see Chap. 13). Their tangible evidence of employability capital, as mentioned just now, must match the job description. Thus, graduates' ability to self-assess their employability capital against the job description is essential for making decisions about the extent to which they can succeed if they apply for a specific job position. Even so, with higher education expansion, several job applicants can present such tangible employability evidence; thus, graduates' ability to self-present through the job application and the job interview is essential. The way graduates write the CV or resume, the responses to selection criteria, their appearance and attitudes at the job interview, the interpersonal interaction in the job interview room, etc., are examples of where graduates can be assessed about their employability in employers' perspectives. Also, graduates need to show that they understand the job position, the organization, and the industry, being ready to hit the ground running, as noted by employers reported in Chap. 12.

Second, graduates' habitus may facilitate or hinder the translation of employability capital into employment outcomes and utilization of it for career advancement. As mentioned above, if graduates' habitus is aligned with the labor market of a country, an industry, or a job sector—being the social fields—where they need to demonstrate their employability capital for employment purposes, they are in a "fish in water" situation (Bourdieu, 1990). This can be partially illustrated by the case of international graduates who succeeded in securing full-time employment in Australia (Chap. 14) or the case of teachers in South Africa (Chap. 13). Unfortunately, graduates often do not know which social field they would enter beyond the graduation, especially in the time of increasing career mobility (Hao & Liang, 2016). Therefore, in many cases, their way of thinking and behaviors related to how to demonstrate their employability capital may not be in line with the expectations of employers in that social field, resulting in failure of translating their employability capital into employment outcomes (see Chapters 12 and 16). Even in a familiar social field, their habitus may hinder their career advancement, as shown in Chap. 17 where a female academic reflected on how Confucian social cultural standards and expectations of being a wife and a mom negatively affected her utilization of employability capital for career advancement. Bound by social cultural expectations, the female academic did not use or further build up the employability capital for her career advancement, just to meet social expectations of being a wife and a mother.

Third, agency importantly affects the translation of employability capital to employment outcomes and career development. In social science, agency is viewed as the capability to influence one's functioning and the course of events by one's actions (Bandura, 2006). As such, it can be seen as part of the habitus, or way of thinking and acting. Agency can be exercised via four functions: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2006). People first form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realizing them. Then, they set goals and foresee possible outcomes of coming actions to guide and motivate their efforts. They also need to regulate their actions on top of planning and fore-thinking. Finally, they reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, the meaning of their pursuits, and make corrective adjustments if necessary (Bandura, 2006). In many instances reported in Part IV of this book, graduates showed their ability to act independently in shaping their career trajectories. In Chap. 15, the author reported different career paths of five international graduates of an Erasmus Mundus master's program. Ten years after their graduation, the graduates experienced many ups and downs in developing their career, but they all converged at one point: knowing what to do next in order to advance in their careers. They exercised their agency in utilizing the capital they had and further built the capital that they were lacking. As a result, they succeeded in transitioning into different jobs that were indirectly relevant to the expertise trained in the master programs, either in the host, the home, or a third country, and finally build a career in which they can use the capital developed, including self-employment. Thanks to their agency, they could address difficulties they faced in the social fields where they were functioning: their status being a foreigner in the host country, the lack of career orientation in the design of the program, employers' unawareness of the new field of study offered by the program, and the aftermath of the global crisis 2007–2008. It is also the case of international graduates remaining in Australia reported in Chap. 14. Despite being disadvantaged in the Australian labor market at first, the exercise of their agency helped them gradually gain an advantage to access to job opportunities. Thus, agency appears to moderate the translation of employability skills/capital to employment outcomes and career advancement.

Fourth, accompanying individual agency, identity may play an important role in graduates' career development. Identity is who you are or whom you want to become; thus, it drives individuals to think and act in ways that support the development toward achieving the identity that they are inspired to obtain (Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2016). Career identity prevails when graduates have already been in a dream job. Even so, employed graduates may want to demonstrate that career identity more explicitly so that it can be acknowledged by others. This can be illustrated in the case of employed South African teachers upgrading qualifications or acquiring new skills to sustain their teaching career (see Chap. 13), as professional expertise is one aspect of professional identity (Adams et al., 2006). Graduates may have many jobs throughout their lives, but a career seems significant as it defines who they are more clearly than a job does. From employers' viewpoints, identity is also something that they look for to make hiring decisions. For example, in Chap. 12, employers were reported to look for job applicants who could convince them that they were ready to effectively undertake the job advertised. This is the identity that employers ascribed to a job applicant based on the appraisal of their fit with the job position (see Lauriala & Kukkonen, 2005). Thus, employers may turn down a job applicant if his/her identity is not shown aligned with the employability capital demonstrated.

With these findings in mind, we propose a framework that can be used to understand the translation of employability capital into employment outcomes (Fig. 19.1). Career identity is at the heart of that translation process because it defines what graduates want to do or become. Career identity, in many instances, has developed before students graduate, directing students to develop capital that makes such career identity more visible. Depending on where graduates position their career identity, the characteristics of their translation of employability capital into employment outcomes vary. If they position their career identity on the interface between what they can do and what the labor market needs, they are most likely to land a temporary employment position. It is because they do not have real passion for it. Also, the labor market and their personal needs will change through time, and thus, they will need to repeat the translation process to accommodate the changing needs. If they position their career identity between what they love to do and the labor market needs, it may lead them to long-term employment. Even when the labor market needs change, they may stick with the job because they love to do it, feel attached to it, or find it significant for them in some ways. Finally, if graduates position their career identity between what they can do and what they love to do, regardless of the labor market needs, it is likely that they may venture into self-employment or entrepreneurship. In this case, they demonstrate employability capital to no one else rather than themselves, and thus employment outcomes or career advancement is attached to their self-actualization, the highest needs of human beings (D'Souza & Gurin, 2016).

In conclusion, the translation of graduate employability capital to employment outcomes and career development does not happen automatically, but it may be affected by the graduates' habitus of how to demonstrate it. It requires graduates to exercise their agency to demonstrate what they have to employers, utilize and further build it up for career advancement. A career identity appears to enhance graduates' capability to exercise their agency for their career development in specific contexts and simultaneously affects their choice in the process of translating their employability into employment outcomes. Depending on how they position their career identity, graduates may end up with different types of employment: temporary, long-term, or self-employment. Regardless of employment types, in the end, it appears that self-fulfillment or self-actualization is the ultimate needs of each individual. In this regard, we call for more empirical research linking employability skills to graduates' entrepreneurial orientation. This will extend recent empirical work on students' career adaptability and entrepreneurship (Tolentino, Garcia, et al., 2014; Tolentino, Sedoglavich, et al., 2014).

Reconceptualization of Employability

This book project finds that graduate employability is a loosely defined concept as different stakeholders have different perspectives on it. Generally, graduate employability is conceptualized as the possession of sets of skills that enable graduates to succeed in the labor market and thrive in their careers, as noted in Holmes (2013). This

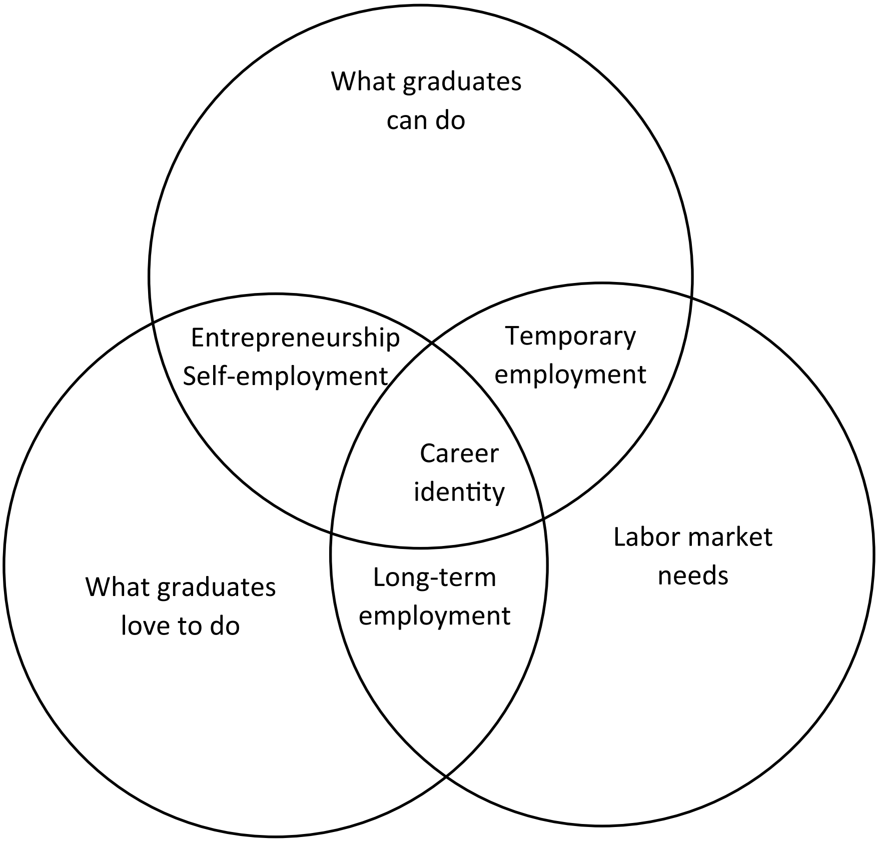

What graduates can do
Entrepreneurship Self-employment
Temporary employment
Career identity
Labor market needs
What graduates love to do
Long-term employment

Fig. 19.1 The translation of employability capital into employment outcomes

conceptualization of employability has resulted in the dominance of the skill-based approach, which develops just some skills deemed to be important for the workplace, in many higher education contexts (see Part III of this book). This conceptualization may create a false understanding that if graduates possess these skills, they will be employed and thrive in their career.

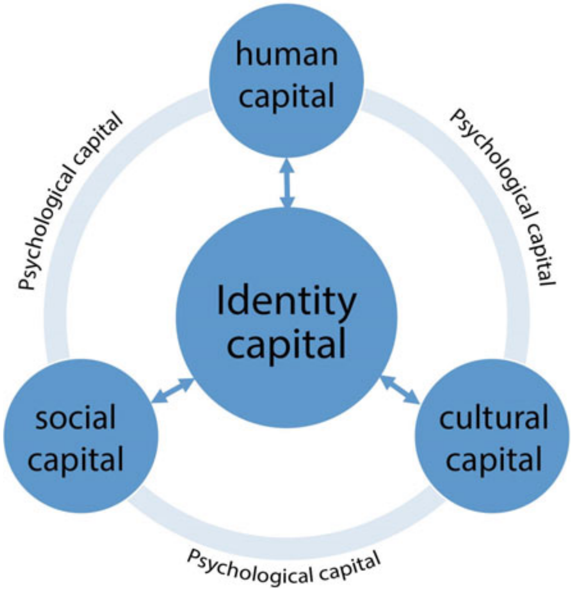
Empirical findings from the six chapters in Part IV, translation of employability to employment outcomes and career development, indicate that in order to secure employment opportunities and succeed in one's career, graduates will need more than knowledge and skills related to their field of studies. They would need a career identity to guide their career paths, and psychological attributes such as resilience, adaptability, flexibility to cope with eventualities or manage changes in their career. They would need knowledge and abilities to act in alignment with the culture and work practices of the target organization or industry and an extensive social network with professionals who may give them better access to job opportunities and support. All of these are resources/capital that graduates can use to firstly obtain a job and secondly continuously develop their employability for their career advancement. Therefore, graduate employability is firstly a combination of different types of capital. Such capital is named and described differently in the literature; we would like to clarify our viewpoint about what constitutes each type of employability capital, as follows:

- Human capital: all knowledge and skills that enable graduates to work efficiently
- Social capital: network with professionals and others plus the social class in which graduates and their families are situated
- Cultural capital: embodied cultural values of a graduate as well as their insights and skills related to the culture and work practices of the target organization or industry
- Psychological capital: psychological attributes enhancing graduates' ability to cope with eventualities or manage changes in their career (e.g., such as resilience, adaptability, and flexibility), including their agency enabling graduates to strategize and utilize available resources to attain their career goals
- Identity capital: a clear perspective of whom graduates want to become, a compass to guide graduates to act in order to realize that identity

Existing literature has not described the relationship between types of employability capital. In our view, the boundaries between them are not clear-cut but overlapping, and they mutually influence each other. Once the initial career identity is formed, it can direct a student to develop human capital, social capital, and cultural capital relevant to realizing that identity, under the support of psychological capital. As such, the first notion that we draw from this book is that graduate employability is a complex combination of different types of capital or resources that graduates have possessed or have access to. This is contrary to the current dominant view of graduate employability being the possession of knowledge and skills, which has strengthened the skill-based approach in higher education for decades. The employability capital and relationship between them are illustrated in Fig. 19.2. This conceptual framework should be further investigated and validated by empirical studies.

Second, employability can be absolute, but employment outcomes are relative. As discussed previously, employability does not automatically translate into employment outcomes and career success. The translation process depends much on how graduates perceive and self-assess their employability as well as demonstrate it to prospective employers. The employability of a graduate may not stay the same when they apply for different jobs. It is because each time they do so, they have to compete with different job applicants who have unique employability package for the job. In the same manner, the employability of a graduate is dependent on employers' preference. Even when graduates satisfy all of the job requirements, they can be deemed inappropriate for the job just based on the employers' subjective perceptions (see Chap. 15). Labor market factors also play an important role. For example, in a fast-growing industry, the demand for a skilled workforce can afford some "less employable" graduates a job. In contrast, when an industry's labor market reaches its saturation, employable graduates may not be able to find work easily. All of these are aligned with the claim from Hillage and Pollard (1998) that employability depends

Fig. 19.2 Employability capital



on "the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context […] within which they seek work" (p. 12).

Third, graduate employability is not static. Until now, the literature centers around employability as something developed predominantly throughout the time students are in higher education (i.e., not prior to their entry to higher education or beyond their graduation). However, employability starts to form as soon as one is born, with the social class of the family they are born into. As noted in McQuaid and Lindsay (2005), social position or social class is an important element of employability because it is associated with privileges one may have. For example, students from affluent families may have better access to high-quality education and a social network of influential people. Types of employability capital are accumulated over time but may be most intensively in higher education. Even after a graduate receives a job offer, their employability continues to grow via professional development activities and social interaction with colleagues in the chosen organization, industry, or profession. Yet, the evolution of graduate employability seems to depend on one's agency (see Chapters 14–17). Agency is a complex phenomenon. Generally, we are often goal-oriented; we monitor the environment and select methods to efficiently reach the intended goals. Agency is the ability to perceive and act to change the conditions/circumstances in a way beneficial for our goal-oriented actions. In relation to graduate employability, it can be understood simply as students' abilities to analyze the situation around them and use appropriate strategies to build up employability capital that enhances their access to a target industry, organization, or job position. It is graduates' abilities to understand the labor market, utilize existing employability capital, and further build it up to seize new career opportunities. Such abilities appear to influence the developmental level of employability capital, their success in obtaining the employment position they want, and shape the career path in accordance with their will. Without such agency, employability may develop under the influence of others rather than the student's/ graduates' intention; thus, it may become fragmented or discontinued.

Fourth, employability capital needs continuous improvement to help graduates sustain their competitiveness in the labor market. As shown in Chap. 13, which reported South African teachers' translation of employability capital into the career development, the graduates needed to keep on improving capital important for their teaching career, even after securing a teaching position. It was not only about the skills directly related to their teaching tasks but also about people skills and skills that helped them survive in the increasingly technologized world. The study reported in Chap. 15 indicated that ten years upon graduation, international graduates' careers were only partially shaped by the knowledge and skills acquired from the university but mostly by the capital further developed following their postgraduate studies. That is, without polishing or developing the new capital, the values of the capital gained from the Master's program could have been inadequate. Likewise, in Chap. 17, the author self-reflected on her academic career, realizing that not utilizing and further developing her employability capital due to family commitments weakened her social relationships with colleagues (i.e., social capital), reduced her professional aspiration (i.e., identity) and diminished existing knowledge stock and skills (i.e., human capital). Indeed, without updating, employability capital may decrease its value through time, and that lifelong learning is important for sustaining employability upon graduation.

Fifth, the values of employability capital fluctuate if they are used in different labor markets. Chap. 14 reported that international graduates struggled to look for jobs in the host country, Australia, as they were unfamiliar with the local recruitment practices and work cultures as well as employers' expectations. They were disadvantaged in their access to and possibilities of successfully applying for job opportunities due to a lack of social network and social identity (e.g., their visa status), although they may have similar academic credentials and work experience as local graduates. However, several studies have evidenced that international graduates have better job and career prospects when returning home due to the valued foreign credential, their international education exposure, and foreign language skills (Pham, 2018; Zweig & Han, 2010). Likewise, in Chap. 16, the authors reported the career development of doctoral graduates, noting the different experiences among local vs. non-local ones. Even though they had the highest qualification and were considered experts in their field, the latter group did not have equal access to job opportunities. Also, in both Chapters 14 and 16, it appeared that employability capital brought by international graduates from the home country was not as much valued in the host labor market. Yet, it depended on how these graduates used and articulated such capital to employers. For these reasons, it is important for graduates to accurately self-evaluate their employability packages in a specific labor market—be it a new country or a new industry—and utilize appropriate strategies to look for job opportunities, demonstrate their current ability, and signal possible future contribution. This is the initial step for them to succeed in translating their employability capital to employment outcomes and career development in a labor market with which they are not familiar.

In short, the findings of this book project suggest that graduate employability should be reconceptualized beyond the skill-based approach. Although it can be simply viewed as the possession of skills, it is also related to the graduates' social position, such as their family background, race, and ethnicity. Both skills and social positions may change through time and depend on graduates' actions within their social contexts. Also, it should be noted that employability is not just about paid employment. It can be self-employment and entrepreneurship to create jobs for oneself and others, a gap in empirical research in the graduate employability domain. High-paid employment can be important in a specific stage of our life, but a career that we feel belonging to, proud of, and shows who we are is a more fundamental dimension of our life. For these reasons, graduate employability should be viewed as a lifelong process of continuing building up and utilizing capital available or resources that graduates can get access to, so that they can realize career goals in specific stages of their life. That process may include numerous negotiations between the graduates—with their own personal traits, thinking, and behaviors—and contextual factors. Under the guidance of personal agency and career identity, graduate employability becomes a lifelong process of building up and using capital available instead of just possession of skills.

Implications for Employability Agenda in Higher Education

Altogether, the research reported in this book provides important implications regarding the effectiveness of implementing the graduate employability agenda in higher education and its implementation. Conceptually, graduate employability should move beyond the skill-based approach to embrace a more holistic view, depicting graduate employability as a continuing process that starts from the student's initial development stage till well beyond their engagement with work. During such a process, they develop, utilize and renew employability capital continuously to adapt to new situations, fit in with job profiles and descriptions, and thrive in the chosen career. To help students achieve employability in this sense, we would like higher education institutions to consider a six-step graduate employability process, framed within the notion of lifelong learning, with some ideas for each stage (Fig. 19.3). It should be noted that employability development is not necessarily a linear process. Instead, the steps are interactive. For example, while building up employability capital (steps 2 and 6), they may enrich their employability knowledge (step 1). When they search for jobs, they continuously self-assess their employability to choose the best suitable. The steps in this process are also repetitive in a spiral cycle. Step 6 is the repeat of step 2, but building up employability capital at step 6 occurs at a higher level and takes place in the workplace context instead of the higher education context as in step 2, and then the cycle will continue.

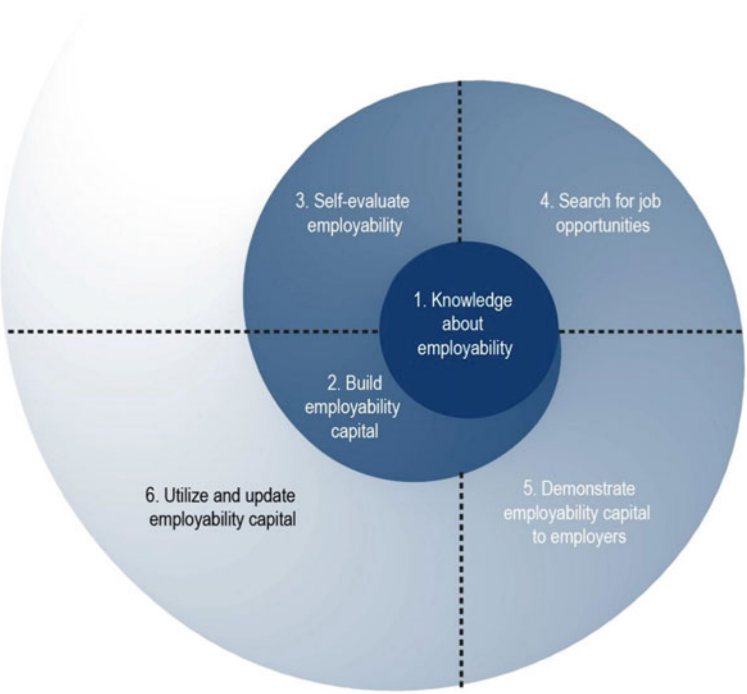

3. Self-evaluate employability
4. Search for job opportunities
1. Knowledge about employability
2. Build employability capital
6. Utilize and update employability capital
5. Demonstrate employability capital to employers

Fig. 19.3 Graduate employability as a lifelong process

Step 1: Knowledge About Employability

The first step is to develop students' basic knowledge about the current landscape of graduate employment and career development with associated opportunities and challenges. They should also be taught about the importance of and how to develop employability capital from their first year in higher education to gradually develop awareness of the complexities of the labor market and career readiness by graduation. Equipped with employability-related knowledge, they will be more proactive in seeking for suitable employability initiatives to participate on and off campus.

A weakness of the current employability agenda in higher education is that policy information and details are often hidden. According to Barrie et al. (2009) in the case of Australian higher education, or by Tran (2019) in the case of Vietnamese universities, stakeholders are not fully informed of the universities' approaches to employability. As a result, stakeholders, especially academics, do not engage with the agenda, and students fail to develop their career-readiness credentials. It is thus important to inform students of the institutional perspective toward employability, what the university is doing to develop their employability, and how it can be evaluated, if any. The key point here is that all employability-related information and policies should be visible and accessible by students and communicated with clarity to them. Such knowledge will subsequently facilitate their participation in employability development initiatives. The clarity in employability-related policies, standards, and guidelines will further enhance the reputation of the institution, noting the increasing emphasis on student employability and graduate employment from the perspective of prospective students, their parents, and employers. Furthermore, the visibility and accomplishment of the employability agenda are essential to the institution's ability to meet the expectations of policymakers. Indeed, employment outcomes have recently become important indicators in the performance-based funding models in countries such as Australia (Australian Government, 2019) and Canada (Canadian Government, 2020). Therefore, such practices will be the right move in the future of the employability agenda.

Step 2: Building up Employability Capital

The second step is to facilitate students' building of employability capital necessary for their future careers. In this step, students should be able to identify a type of job or a specific industry that they would like to enter through planning, undertaking, and collecting evidence of their employability capital over time (e.g., see Bridgstock, 2009). The establishment of an initial career identity has been found to positively influence the development of employability capital and shape graduates' career paths (Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2016). The success of this step depends on how employability development initiatives can be designed and executed to cater to students' diverse needs. As examples, popular initiatives to develop employability for students are:

- *Embedding employability skills into the curriculum.* This practice has been done in several higher education institutions. It begins with mapping specific skills into the curriculum of a specific subject (Lu et al., 2018; Oliver, Jones et al., 2007; Spencer et al., 2012). This is not a simple task to implement because it requires a lot of effort for curriculum mapping and design (Al-Mahmood & Gruba, 2007; Ang et al., 2014; Barrie et al., 2009). Academics may not engage with this initiative due to insufficient time to deliver course knowledge, technical skills, and soft skills embedded in a subject (Tran, 2017b). It is also because they believe that developing employability skills for students is not their primary responsibility; or they do not feel confident to do so due to a lack of experience in providing graduate employability training (de la Harpe & David, 2012; Jones, 2009; Tran, 2017b). Hence, relevant support and training for academics interested in embedding and teaching employability skills within the curriculum will be paramount to their engagement with the agenda and the students' learning quality.
- *Work-integrated learning (WIL).* This initiative has long been used in many disciplines with a vocational education tradition. It is now popular and can be found in almost all disciplines. On top of traditional forms of WIL such as internship, practicum, or apprenticeship, there have been several forms of WIL in higher

education now such as mentoring, field trip, service learning, virtual internship, and simulations (Avramenko, 2012; Franks & Oliver, 2012; Valencia-Forrester, 2020). WIL has been found to positively support the development of graduate employability capital and employment outcomes (Gault et al., 2010; Jackson, 2013; Tran & Nguyen, 2018). However, students' access to WIL can be limited due to a lack of connection with employers or industry sponsors. Hence, a pool of sustained industry partnerships and engaged alumni will be key to the implementation and longevity of WIL programs.

- *Extra- and co-curricular activities*. Extra- and co-curricular activities have been used to develop employability skills for students (Lau et al., 2014; Tran, 2017a). Students with a record of participating in these activities appear to be favored by employers as it may show students' activeness and social network (Lau et al., 2014). However, these employability development initiatives are often undervalued by students because they may want to focus more on curriculum-based activities to achieve a greater GPA (Tran, 2017a). In addition, students may not engage with these activities due to time constraints to complete curriculum-based, extra- or co-curricular activities and even part-time jobs (Tran, 2017a). Therefore, it is important to highlight the value of extra- or co-curricular activities by showing students how beneficial they are to their personal and career growth. For instance, several institutions are formally recognizing students' completion of certain programs, such as the ANU + program at The Australian National University[1] (Australian National University, 2020) and the UNSW Advantage at UNSW Sydney,[2] and the PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) program at Macquarie University.[3]
- *Student career services*. The services can be found in most higher education institutions, and they are set up to provide a suite of career development opportunities for students, ranging from one-on-one career consultations and career workshops to employer events and career fairs. Despite their importance, these services are not fully utilized by many students (again, due to time constraints and lack of student interests or awareness). The availability of multiple career service offerings (e.g., those offered in the business school vs. those offered by the central career services) might also lead to confusion. Hence, cross-campus collaboration in career development opportunities will allow a streamlined and synergistic delivery of the offerings and the provision of high-quality service offerings to both students and external stakeholders.

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[1] https://www.anu.edu.au/students/careers-opportunities/volunteering/anu.

[2] https://student.unsw.edu.au/advantage.

[3] https://students.mq.edu.au/experience/practical-experience/pace-experience.

Step 3: Self-Evaluating Employability Capital

Self-assessment can critically enhance students' lifelong learning ability (Boud, 1989) and may increase their motivation and engagement with the learning process (McMillan & Hearn, 2008; Munns & Woodward, 2006). Through the self-evaluation process, students reflect upon the development of their employability skills against the selection criteria of some particular jobs or undertake mock activities such as interviews and assessment centers. Notably, several self-evaluating tools or practices have been developed to enable students to self-assess their employability capability (Helens-Hart, 2019; Marais & Perkins, 2012).

However, the self-evaluation process may not be effective if students are not familiar with these self-assessment tools or practices, lack confidence to do so, or overate their employability (Jackson, 2014; Leach, 2012). Hence, it is necessary to provide them with some mock self-assessment practice against authentic job selection criteria, through which students will identify different job opportunities available in the target industry, understand what employers look for, and figure out what evidence they need to provide in order to meet the employers' expectations. Likewise, to improve the accuracy of using self-assessment tools or practices, institutions should collaborate with alumni industry experts to provide accurate evaluation and critical feedback to students.

Step 4: Searching for Job Opportunities

Searching for job opportunities should be considered an important aspect of employability as it is the graduates' first step to translate their employability into employment outcomes. Even when students want to self-employ and establish their own business ventures, the job searching and application processes allow them to accumulate useful learning experience. Students should be taught that they are not the only ones who should proactively search for jobs; employers themselves also look for potential employees who can perform the job well and fit in their organizational cultures. Beyond the traditional sources of job opportunities (university job boards, recruitment agencies, direct opportunities offered by employers), students should be informed of the importance of personal networks. That is why developing social capital for students is critical for their career success. Importantly, social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn) can be excellent venues where graduates can create a professional profile to market themselves to prospective employers. In this regard, students will benefit from training on how to create a professional online presence because it can impact their employment prospects if not managed properly (Caers & Castelyns, 2011).

Step 5: Demonstrating Employability Capital to Employers

Except for those who want to self-employ or build their own business start-ups, graduates should be able to effectively demonstrate their employability capital via the job application process. They should be able to critically read the job advertisements to see what the employers require from their ideal candidates and what documents or evidence they need to supply. Additionally, students should be able to map their skills and credentials against the employer's expectations. The practice of self-assessment specified in Step 3 can be applied here in this process to ensure that they have the confidence and capabilities to address what employers are looking for.

Students should be taught the differences between a CV and a resume, how to create a professional CV or resume for different types of jobs. Students must be able to select the most relevant employability-related information to the job for the CV or resume because it is where employers perceive job applicants' employability (Cole et al., 2007). It is essential to encourage them to create a "master CV", which is updated regularly and used to then generate "tailored CV" for a specific job they apply for (Cleary & Horsfall, 2013). While the responses to selection criteria may not be required for all job adverts, students should be trained on how to write these responses using a STAR approach (i.e., providing a specific situation, explaining the task assigned in that situation, how they take actions, and the results). As job applications are more often screened by an applicant tracking system or algorithm (Laumer et al., 2015), students should be mindful of the keywords associated with a job that should be included in their application packages.

If graduates progress to the interview round, the demonstration of their employability skills can be elevated to a higher level. The main purpose of the job interview is to further explore employability and the fit of the candidates to the job position and the organization. The professional appearance, attitudes, and behaviors should be presented in a manner to convince the interviewers that they are the right person for the job. Many studies suggest that if applicants do not present themselves professionally at the interview, they are more likely to fail, even when they are qualified (Bruton, 2015; Kaufmann et al., 2017; Patacchini et al., 2015). While graduates' responses to interviewers' questions can further ascertain their expertise and capability to perform the job well, the interviews may also reveal their potential weaknesses related to their confidence, communication skills, and interpersonal interaction. Interviewers may also explore the candidates' understanding of the organization, their plans for the future, or their connections/ association to others in the profession. As such, graduates should learn how to interview well using the STAR technique as aforementioned and be encouraged to rehearse (Lackner & Martini, 2017) with a friend, colleague, or career counselor.

Step 6: Utilizing and Updating Employability Capital for the Future

This step might be perceived to be beyond the control of higher education institutions as it requires graduates to independently function within the professional fields of their organization and industry, demonstrating that they are capable employees by utilizing their employability capital. However, higher education institutions can play a productive role in this process by developing alumni networks and extend graduates' access to career services over a number of years after their graduation. Updating employability allows graduates to better deal with market uncertainties due to external factors such as global economic crises, pandemics, technological advancement, and complex political environment (Bakhshi et al., 2017; Hager & Holland, 2006; Lobel, 2017). Hence, it is important for students to develop the following:

- *Career identity*: An early development of the initial career identity will influence their engagement with certain employability development initiatives, making them "eligible" to become one in an industry they want to be part of (Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2016). Career identity can change as graduates move between jobs, organizations, or industries. However, their experience with building the first career identity will help them a great deal with coping with possible identity crises and building a new career identity.
- *Psychological capital*: As the labor market is becoming more competitive, it is vital for graduates to possess psychological attributes (e.g., adaptability, resilience, flexibility, and optimism) that enable them to quickly adapt to changes and flexibly navigate unforeseen circumstances. These psychological attributes have been identified as examples of psychological capital by Tomlinson (2017), a key component of his employability framework, and discussed in several studies on the determinants of career success (Ahmad et al., 2019; Haibo et al., 2018).
- *Career management*: Modern careers do not follow a linear trajectory (see the reflections of graduates in Tran et al., 2020). Graduates may have to undertake many jobs, including ones they do not like, before successfully gaining and pursuing one they find meaningful and worthwhile as a long-term career. Therefore, higher education institutions should equip students with career management skills, i.e., "the abilities to proactively navigate the working world and successfully manage the career-building process, based on attributes such as lifelong learning and adaptability" (Bridgstock, 2009, p. 35). These skills will enable students to understand the nuances in the job market and explore alternative career paths that they would like to embrace.
- *Lifelong learning*: At the workplace, graduates may encounter situations where they need to learn new knowledge, skills, and technologies. Likewise, mobility between jobs, organizations, or industries throughout their career trajectories also requires graduates to be able to learn autonomously so that they can successfully adapt to and undertake the new work roles. Therefore, higher education institutions need to include lifelong learning as one aspect of their employability agenda to enhance graduates' career success, which has been evidenced in several

studies (Dosunmu & Adeyemo, 2018; Fejes, 2014). For example, it is useful to train students in reflective learning and self-directed learning skills, which will gradually nurture their lifelong learning ability (Bradbury et al., 2012; Goh, 2019)

Step 6 is also a repetition of Step 2, where graduates continue to develop their employability capital while they are at work and are utilizing their existing employability capital. After Step 6, the process will repeat Steps 3, 4, and 5 and keep going on. Being well-prepared for new work position within or outside the employing organization will allow graduates to build their career and attain self-fulfillment of what they want to do and become. A fulfilled career is definitely better than just a job.

It is our hope that the six-step process of building up and using employability capital provides a more holistic view of employability development. While the ideas may not be completely new, we attempt to systematically link the initiatives currently in place in different higher education contexts together to make the implementation of the employability agenda more systematic and inclusive.

The final notes we would like to mention are related to the student/graduate and employers. The current dominant skill-based approach may mislead students/graduates, attributing their success or failure in securing employment opportunities or career development to a simple lack of skills. While this may be true, there are other causes such as labor market factors and employers' preferences. Therefore, when a graduate applies for a job or develops their own career, it is important to see the possibility of success in relation to their competitors and the labor market, instead of just focusing on their skills. In this context, continuous upgrading of employability capital is important as it allows them to sustain their competitiveness in the labor market. For employers, there is evidence of employers' increasing demand for skills of graduates and blaming the higher education sector for the shortage of skills among graduates. We believe that to narrow the skill gap, it is important for sustained university-industry partnerships to implement the employability agenda, including upskilling of professionals currently navigating their career paths. A complete passing of the responsibility to the employees for their expertise upskilling or career development may do more harm than good. If all employers provide professional development opportunities to their employees, even when labor mobility is high, the organizations will benefit from skilled labor circulation instead of skilled labor loss.

Conclusion

This book explores stakeholders' perspectives, their practices, and engagement with implementing the employability agenda in higher education. The book also explores graduates' translation and further development of post-graduation employability for career success within a rapidly changing world. Generally, the book finds that institutions and individuals have different perspectives about what makes graduates employable; however, they commonly conceptualize graduate employability as possession of skills. Under this conceptualization, initiatives launched to develop graduate employability for students are framed within the skill-based or competency-based approach. The book further reveals that graduates, when entering the labor market, need more than just skills to secure employment and thrive in their careers. It shows that career success is determined by how students/graduates agentically drive it, continuously building and utilizing different types of employability capital purposefully. Based on findings from the book project, we argue that it is important to reconceptualize graduate employability to advance the employability agenda. The agenda should move beyond the skill or competency perspective and the skill-based teaching approach; it should be viewed as a lifelong process of constantly building up and using employability capital. We provide a six-stage framework that can be adopted by higher education institutions to develop graduate employability in a way that aligns employability with the current global economic climate and labor market realities. Acknowledging that employability is individual-oriented (Brown et al., 2003; Clarke, 2018), we still would like to call for a shared responsibility approach in executing the employability agenda in higher education, with the involvement of students, teachers, institutions, professional networks, employers, and national policy and expertise (Smith et al., 2018). Although this book has not involved studies in many countries and explored all employability development initiatives available, we hope that presentative perspectives, practices, and experiences with the employability agenda in different continents, higher education systems, institutions, and disciplines can serve as a valuable reference for all who are concerned about the implementation of graduate employability in higher education.

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