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,

T. T. Be (✉) · I. Khatoon (✉)
Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
e-mail: tuyetbt@ftu.edu.vn

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd. 2022

T. L. H. Nghia et al. (eds.), *Graduate Employability Across Contexts*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-3959-4_4

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.

References

Altan, B. A., & Altıntas, H. O. (2017). Professional identities of vocational high school students and extra-curricular activities. *Journal of Education and Training Studies, 5*(7), 46–52. https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v5i7.2446

Andrews, J., & Higson, H. (2008). Graduate employability, "soft skills" versus "hard" business knowledge: A European study. *Higher Education in Europe, 33*(4), 411–422. https://doi.org/10.1080/03797720802522627

Arum, R., & Roksa, J. (2014). *Aspiring adults adrift: Tentative transitions of college graduates.* University of Chicago Press.

Barrie, S., Hughes, C., Smith, C., & Thomson, K. (2009). *The national graduate attributes project: Integration and assessment of graduate attributes in curriculum.* Australian Learning and Teaching Council. https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A64684

Barrie, S. C. (2012). A research-based approach to generic graduate attributes policy. *Higher Education Research & Development, 31*(1), 79–92. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2012.642842

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544–559. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/2

Billett, S. (2010). Learning through practice. In S. Billet (Ed.), *Learning through practice* (pp. 1–20). Springer.

Binkley, M., Erstad, O., Herman, J., Raizen, S., Ripley, M., Miller-Ricci, M., & Rumble, M. (2012). Defining twenty-first century skills. In P. Griffin, B. McGaw, & E. Care (Eds.), *Assessment and teaching of 21st century skills* (pp. 17–66). Springer.

Blackmore, P., Bulaitis, Z. H., Jackman, A. H., & Tan, E. (2016). Employability in higher education: A review of practice and strategies around the world. *Report commissioned by Pearson efficacy and research.* https://uk.pearson.com/content/dam/region-core/uk/pearson-uk/documents/about/news-and-policy/employability-models-synthesis.pdf.

Bosanquet, A. (2011). Brave new worlds, capabilities and the graduates of tomorrow. *Cultural Studies Review, 17*(2), 100–114. https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v17i2.2001

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Riachardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical reason: On the theory of action.* Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology.* University of Chicago Press.

Bowden, J. A. (2004). Capabilities-driven curriculum design. In C. Baille & I. More (Eds.), *Effective learning and teaching in engineering* (pp. 36–48). RoutledgeFalmer.

Bradford, J. (2013). *A qualitative exploration examining the enhancement of students' personal and professional development through an employability focused curriculum.* Liverpool John Moores University.

Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research & Development, 28*(1), 31–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360802444347

Brunner, B. R., Zarkin, K., & Yates, B. L. (2018). What do employers want? What should faculty teach? A content analysis of entry level employment ads in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Education, 4*(2), 21–50.

Carnevale, A. P., & Smith, N. (2013). Workplace basics: The skills employees need and employers want. *Human Resource Management International, 16*(5), 491–501. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2013.821267

Chhinzer, N., & Russo, A. M. (2018). An exploration of employer perceptions of graduate student employability. *Education+Training, 60*(1), 104–120. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-06-2016-0111

Clarke, M. (2017). Rethinking graduate employability: The role of capital, individual attributes and context. *Studies in Higher Education, 43*(11), 1923–1937. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1294152

Cooper, L., Orrell, J., & Bowden, M. (2010). *Work integrated learning: A guide to effective practice.* Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Sage.

Crosling, G., & Ward, I. (2002). Oral communication: The workplace needs and uses of business graduate employees. *English for Specific Purposes, 21*(1), 41–57. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(00)00031-4

Crossman, J. E., & Clarke, M. (2009). International experience and graduate employability: Stakeholder perceptions on the connection. *Higher Education, 59*(5), 599–613. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-009-9268-z

Cumming, J. (2010). Contextualised performance: Reframing the skills debate in research education. *Studies in Higher Education, 35*(4), 405–419. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070903082342

Curtis, D., & McKenzie, P. (2001). *Employability skills for Australian industry: Literature review and framework development*: Australian Council for Educational Research Melbourne. https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A33428

de la Harpe, B., & David, C. (2012). Major influences on the teaching and assessment of graduate attributes. *Higher Education Research & Development, 31*(4), 493–510.

Donald, W. E., Baruch, Y., & Ashleigh, M. (2017). The undergraduate self-perception of employability: Human capital, careers advice, and career ownership. *Studies in Higher Education, 44*, 599–614. *1–16*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1387107

Dumenden, I. E., & English, R. (2013). Fish out of water: Refugee and international students in mainstream Australian schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 17*(10), 1078–1088. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2012.732120

Dunbar, K., Laing, G., & Wynder, M. (2016). A content analysis of accounting job advertisements: Skill requirements for graduates. *e-Journal of Business Education and Scholarship of Teaching, 10*(1), 58–72. http://www.ejbest.org

Elo, S., & Kyngas, H. (2008, April). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 62*(1), 107–115. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis. *SAGE Open, 4*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633

Felstead, A., Gallie, D., & Green, F. (2002). *Work skills in Britain, 1986–2001.* ESRC Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance.

Fugate, M., Kinicki, A. J., & Ashforth, B. E. (2004). Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 65*(1), 14–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2003.10.005

Graduate Careers Australia. (2018). *Australian graduate survey.* http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/research/researchreports/gradstats/

GOS National Report. (2021). *Graduate outcomes survey.* https://www.qilt.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/2021-gos-national-report.pdf?sfvrsn=290c8289_0

Green, W., Hammer, S., & Star, C. (2009). Facing up to the challenge: Why is it so hard to develop graduate attributes? *Higher Education Research & Development, 28*(1), 17–29. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360802444339

Harvey, L. (1999). *Employability: Developing the relationship between higher education and employment.* Warwick University. http://qualityresearchinternational.com/esecttools/relatedpubs/Employability5thQHE.pdf

Heather, W., & Roy, S. (2018). Thinking globally, working locally: Employability and internationalization at home. *Journal of Studies in International Education.* https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315317751686

Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998). *Employability: Developing a framework for policy analysis.* DfEE London.

Hogan, R., Chamorro-Premuzic, T., & Kaiser, R. B. (2013). Employability and career success: Bridging the gap between theory and reality. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 6*(1), 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1111/iops.12001

Hughes, C., & Barrie, S. (2010). Influences on the assessment of graduate attributes in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35*(3), 325–334.

Jackson, D. (2015). Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: Barriers and best practice. *Studies in Higher Education, 40*(2), 350–367. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.842221

Jackson, D. (2016). Re-conceptualising graduate employability: The importance of pre-professional identity. *Higher Education Research & Development, 35*(5), 925–939. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2016.1139551

Jackson, D., & Wilton, N. (2017). Perceived employability among undergraduates and the importance of career self-management, work experience and individual characteristics. *Higher Education Research & Development, 36*(4), 747–762. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2016.1229270

Jones, A. (2009). Generic attributes as espoused theory: The importance of context. *Higher Education, 58*(2), 175–191.

Kielhofner, G. (2002). *A model of human occupation: Theory and application.* Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Killick, D., & Dean, L. (2013). Embedding internationalisation, and employability through graduate attributes. *Brookes e-Journal of Learning and Teaching.*

Kinash, S., Crane, L., Judd, M.-M., & Knight, C. (2016). Discrepant stakeholder perspectives on graduate employability strategies. *Higher Education Research & Development, 35*(5), 951–967. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2016.1139555

Kinash, S., Crane, L., Schulz, M., Dowling, D., & Knight, C. (2014). *Improving graduate employability: Strategies from three universities.* Paper presented at the Ireland International Conference on Education (IICE). Ireland.

Lamont, M., & Lareau, A. (1988). Cultural capital: Allusions, gaps and glissandos in recent theoretical developments. *Sociological Theory,* 153–168. https://doi.org/10.2307/202113

Lindorff, M. (2011). Skills gaps in Australian firms. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training, 63*(2), 247–259.

Marginson, S., & Considine, M. (2000). *The enterprise university: Power, governance and reinvention in Australia.* Cambridge University Press.

Martin, E. M. (2013). Fostering culture change in an undergraduate business program: "Nudging" students towards greater involvement in extra-curricular activities. *American Journal of Business Education (AJBE)*, *6*(1), 93–102. https://doi.org/10.19030/ajbe.v6i1.7487

McArdle, S., Waters, L., Briscoe, J. P., & Hall, D. T. T. (2007). Employability during unemployment: Adaptability, career identity and human and social capital. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 71*(2), 247–264. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2007.06.003

McMurray, S., Dutton, M., McQuaid, R., & Richard, A. (2016). Employer demands from business graduates. *Education+Training, 58*(1), 112–132.

McQuaid, R. W., Green, A., & Danson, M. (2005). Introducing employability. *Urban Studies (Routledge), 42*(2), 191–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000316092

McQuaid, R. W., & Lindsay, C. (2005). The concept of employability. *Urban Studies, 42*(2), 197–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000316100

Oliver, B. (2015). Redefining graduate employability and work-integrated learning: Proposals for effective higher education in disrupted economies. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability, 6*(1), 56. https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2015vol6no1art573

Pitman, T., & Broomhall, S. (2009). Australian universities, generic skills and lifelong learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 28*(4), 439–458. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/; https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370903031280

Rasul, M. S., Rauf, R. A. A., Mansor, A. N., & Puvanasvaran, A. P. (2012). Employability skills assessment tool development. *International Education Studies, 5*(5), 43. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v5n5p43

Rowe, A. D., & Zegwaard, K. E. (2017). *Developing graduate employability skills and attributes: Curriculum enhancement through work-integrated learning.* https://www.ijwil.org/files/APJCE_18_2_87_99.pdf

Stewart, C., Wall, A., & Marciniec, S. (2016, July). Mixed signals: Do college graduates have the soft skills that employers want? *Competition Forum*, *14*(2), 276–281.

Stevens, M., & Norman, R. (2016, February 2–5). *Industry expectations of soft skills in IT graduates: A regional survey.* Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Australasian Computer Science Week Multiconference, Canberra, Australia.

Tomlinson, M. (2017). Forms of graduate capital and their relationship to graduate employability. *Education+Training, 59*(4), 338–352. https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-05-2016-0090

Tran, L. H. N. (2017). Developing employability skills via extra-curricular activities in Vietnamese universities: Student engagement and inhibitors of their engagement. *Journal of Education and Work, 30*(8), 854–867. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2017.1349880

Tran, L. H. N., & Huynh, N. T. (2019). Preservice teachers' experiences with internship-related challenges in regional schools and their career intention: Implications for teacher education programs. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 40*(2), 159–176.

Trevelyan, J., Baillie, C., MacNish, C., & Fernando, T. (2010, December 5–8). *Designing an integrated engineering foundation course.* Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 21st Annual Conference for the Australasian Association for Engineering Education. https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/180050367

Williams, S., Dodd, L. J., Steele, C., & Randall, R. (2015). A systematic review of current understandings of employability. *Journal of Education and Work, 29*(8), 877–901. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2015.1102210

Thi Tuyet Be has been working at the Faculty of English for Specific Purposes, Foreign Trade University, Vietnam, for almost 15 years. She completed her PhD at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, with a focus on international education and students' employability. Her research interests include developing curricula and pedagogy and teaching English as a second language.

Iffat Khatoon has received her PhD in Education from Victoria University, Melbourne. She is a recipient of the Victoria University Postgraduate Research Scholarship (VUPRS 2016) and Academic Medal of Excellence (2013). Her PhD research focused on the role of creative pedagogy in impacting student creativity and learning. Her other interests involve exploring the relationship between creativity and student employability and teaching English as a second language. She has taught in diverse educational settings across Pakistan and Australia.