

THE STUDENT AND EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE ON GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

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‘Students perceive higher education credentials alone are not enough for graduate work and employability’.

Abstract

The idea of employability is analysed and therefore the prevailing tendency to form employability measures supported outcomes is critiqued. The operationalisation of employability as a concept is examined and the implicit 'magic bullet' notion of employability-development opportunities is revealed. An alternative, more complex model is outlined but its applicability is undermined by the 'irrational' activities of graduate recruiters, which render useless any employability indicator based on the proportion of graduates obtaining work. An alternative approach, supported AN audit of employability-development among establishments, is explored and a few method pitfalls are made public. The conclusion suggests that any evaluation of employability needs clearly to indicate areas for internal improvement rather than simply ranking institutions.

This article reports the impact of employability skills teaching and learning on graduate labour market prospects. The findings of the study solid doubt on the idea that these skills are often effectively developed among lecture rooms. Detailed info gathered at university department level is drawn on to assess how teachers understand and interact within the teaching and learning of employability skills. It is argued that, despite the simplest intentions of teachers to reinforce graduates' employability, the constraints inherent among the agenda can systematically manufacture mixed outcomes. Furthermore, it's argued that resources would be higher utilised to extend employment-based coaching and knowledge and leader involvement in courses, which were found to positively affect immediate graduate prospects within the labour market and, therefore, support graduates in the transitional stage into employment.

Keywords: employability, graduate skills, development, credentials, positional competition

At identical time, the link between instructional credentials and their returns in labour market has been dynamical in recent times. The higher education students understand the role of their educational credentials in relation to their future employability. It shows that students perceive their academic qualifications as having a declining role in shaping their employment outcomes in what is perceived to be a congested and competitive graduate labour market. While educational credentials are still seen as a major dimension of their employability, students more and more see the necessity to feature worth to them so as to achieve a bonus in the labour market. (Michael Tomlison)

However, employers still report that graduates don't seem to be prepared for the globe of labor, and lack some of the most basic skills needed for successful employment. Research into why this can be abounds from the views of multiple stakeholders, including government, employers, higher education institutions and graduates. Interestingly though, the views of undergraduates, the recipients of this employability development, are not well known. This could be necessary, because learning theory tells us that motivation and commitment of learners is an essential prerequisite for effective outcomes. So the question is raised on whether or not undergrad students are engaged with employability skills development. Alex Tymon findings suggest that there is only limited alignment between the views of students and other stakeholder groups. There are variations between 1st, second and final year students, which could explain an observed lack of engagement with employability-related development. Some suggestions for rising engagement are created, alongside ideas on what can realistically, be done within higher education institutions.

Graduate Employability, 'Soft Skills' Versus 'Hard' Business Knowledge:

There is a growing awareness of the importance of higher education to the development of a knowledge-based economy. (Dunning, J.H. 2002. *Regions, Globalization, and the Knowledge-Based Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University press) Universities are increasingly required to produce highly mobile graduates able to respond to the ever-changing needs of the contemporary workplace. This has resulted in queries being raised regarding the standard of the graduate labour market and therefore the ability of graduates to satisfy the requirements of employers.

In addition to this, the rapid expansion of higher education across the world over the past two decades has resulted in questions being raised about the quality of the graduate labour market and the ability of graduates to meet the needs of employers (Teichler, U. 2003. "The way

forward for teaching and therefore the way forward for teaching Research”) so, serious concerns have been expressed about an increasingly wide ‘gap’ between the skills and capabilities of graduates, and therefore the needs AND demands of the work setting in an more and more mobile and globalised society. Despite such concerns, there is a notable gap in current knowledge linking graduate and employer perspectives of the context and content of Business School education to graduate employability.

The study was to create mentally and establish key individual and business connected skills and competencies needed by employers of business graduates and holders of different higher level qualifications, and to discover whether higher education business programmes are meeting the needs of the marketplace. The graduate interview queries centered on individual's experiences of constructing the transition from education to employment and were themed into 5 completely different areas: perceptions' of current employment situations; reflections on higher education; experiences of work-based learning and alternative work; possession of business centered skills and competencies; and also the utility of social and communication skills and competencies. The leader form followed an analogous approach focusing upon: graduate enlisting problems together with coaching and formal graduate employment schemes; perceptions of, and organisational links with, higher education; key business skills and competencies expected of graduates inside the work environment; and social and communication skills and competencies.

Definitions of employability vary greatly from a focus on graduates abilities to adapt their, and use personal and academic skills (Knight, P. T. and Yorke, M. 2004. *Employability, Judging and Communicating Achievements*, York: LTSN.) In analysing such ‘first destination’ statistics Smith et al. suggest that, at an individual level, the probability of unemployment or inactivity six months after graduation is influenced strongly by the individual's class of degree, subject studied, prior qualifications and social class background (2000). Other studies have found that just about two-thirds of all graduate vacancies area unit hospitable graduates from any discipline with the sort of skills needed dependent upon the role to be carried out within a particular organization.

It is evident that employability is an extremely complex, and somewhat vague, concept that is both difficult to articulate and define. However, by synthesizing the available literature, it is possible to identify key ‘transferable’ soft skills and competencies integral to graduate employability:

- Professionalism;
- Reliability;
- The ability to cope with uncertainty;
- The ability to work under pressure;

- The ability to plan and think strategically;
- Good written and verbal communication skills;
- Information and Communication Technology skills;
- Creativity and self-confidence;
- Good self-management and time-management skills;

In utilising and amalgamating the upper than skills and competencies for the wants of shaping graduate employability, the intrinsic link between graduate skills and competencies and the needs of the labour market (Trunk, N. S., Nastav, B., Lesjak, D. and Sulcic, V.) was considered of paramount importance. Thus, the key options of graduate employability known higher than fashioned the idea of the study interviews. Each of the graduates and employers interviewed was given the opportunity to raise the issues they deemed import. The issues provided a comparison of graduate and employer perspectives.

The Requirement:

Three significant themes focusing on different components of graduate employability:

- Interpersonal Competencies (Soft business-related skills);
- Work Experience and Work-Based Learning.

This supports previous arguments that similar expectations and demands are made of graduates across the globe (Harvey, L. and Bowers-Brown, T. Winter2004. "Employability;CrosscountryComparisons".)

Graduate's Perspectives:

Business Specific Issues: Hard-Business Knowledge and Skills

Many expressed instrumental reasons basic cognitive process that a business qualification in itself will enhance employability:

Many of the graduates John Drew attention to the importance of the content and context of their instructional programme. Indeed, specific areas of business information noninheritable while in

education verified to be a valuable quality for the graduates, many of whom identified knowledge indicative of specific modules as particularly useful in their employment:

The graduates conjointly delineated however they were ready to adapt and apply the core business skills learnt in education to their employment:

Not all of the graduates' experiences of moving from education to employment were entirely positive; some delineated sensible difficulties reflective of perceived 'gaps' in their business education:

Throughout the study, the requirement for business graduates to be ready to apply theoretical and abstract information to their 'real life' business state of affairs was evident. However, alternative less tangible softer business-related social skills were conjointly recognised as being important for graduate success.

Interpersonal Competencies: Soft Business-related Skills

In several respects the foremost vital generic ability needed by the graduates was the acquisition of high levels of written language skills:

Whilst the bulk of the graduates felt their education had equipped them with transferable written skills, this wasn't the case once discussing public speaking skills:

Although several of the graduates felt that their education had not provided them with {the necessary|the needed|the mandatory} level of speech skills required within the work surroundings, several felt that their university experiences of group-work had provided them with important team-working skills:

Interpersonal skills weren't solely nonheritable within the schoolroom. For many of the graduates the 'social side' of upper Education was notably valuable therein it afforded them the chance to be told the way to move with folks from wide-ranging cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Work Experience and Work-based Learning

Work expertise gained throughout work-based learning programmes like formal placements and internships described a major facet of the many of the graduates' experiences. The nature of such work expertise varied from country to country. Most of the united kingdom graduates had undertaken a twelve-month-long amount of formal paid work placements, while a number of of the Austrian, Slovenian and Romanian graduates had undertaken a amount of formal

‘internship’. This placement afforded multiple advantages, providing a valuable learning chance throughout that theoretical skills may well be applied to ‘real-life’ employment. Whilst for some students the placement greatly improved their employment prospects.

Employers' Perspectives

Business Specific Issues: Hard Business Knowledge and Skills

It mirrored a personality's ability to suppose in an exceedingly vital and applied manner.

The expectation that graduates needed less management, were more mature and able to fit into the work environment was also expressed by employers:

Graduates want less management and wish a true job with real responsibility. They want to use their knowledge and make a contribution.

Having studied at degree level makes them more mature and more employable, someone who is flexible and who has the ability to prove them.

The content of the duty needs the information of the many subjects like promoting, finance, strategy and so on.

Whilst the flexibility to use core business skills nonheritable throughout education to employment was known as a very important aspect of business education, a number of the employers perceived the foremost valuable asset offered by the graduates to be business acumen:

Employer expects them to have business acumen, to be able to have the ability to take hold of reality and apply the knowledge they've gained at university.

Graduates have to be compelled to gain a grip and to possess business acumen. Not just know the theories.

However, alternative employers felt that business acumen was somewhat lacking within the students they interviewed and graduates they later on utilized.

Graduates typically don't acumen to mix things; they {are doing} not acumen things are connected to every alternative.

Interpersonal Competencies: Soft Business-related Skills

Team-working skills were conjointly known as being an important a part of the graduate portfolio.

It's important that graduates are ready to work as a part of a team.

Graduates have to be compelled to be ready to work along among a team.

Employer looks for evidence that they have worked in teams at university.

Employer wants someone who is innovative and who can come up with ideas. They need to be ready to specific their concepts.

Employer prefers to employ graduates because they generally have a lot of fresh ideas.

Work Experience and Work-based Learning

Like the graduates, the employer's perspectives of graduate work experience, and associated work 'readiness' reflected differences in each country's educational system.

The placement year could be a real winner for employers. The students who've had real experiences of the work surroundings set out on prime within the employment stakes.

The work placement scheme is invaluable. Students get valuable expertise operating in an exceedingly business and perceive however business works.

The employers discussed the benefits of work experience in relation to the internship programmed.

At the same time as formal work-placements were highly valued by graduates and employers alike; employers in all countries recognized that many graduates do not have the opportunity to take part in such formal training, and that part-time employment, undertaken while studying, is the only experience many graduates have. Such part-time employment was known as notably valuable in helping a sleek transition to the work atmosphere.

Any quite work expertise is appreciated, even over a decent degree in some cases.

Work expertise is incredibly necessary, it teaches students concerning business rule, little things like being on time, knowing how to behave in different work situations

Throughout the study it had been evident that each graduates and employers valued the experiences and information gained throughout work placements, internships and alternative part-time employment.

Conclusion

The tangible and intangible skills identified were not distinct, unrelated individual traits but instead represented a synergetic compilation of what may be termed 'ideal' generic skills and

competencies required of graduates in the workplace. In every country the growing graduate market formed the employer's views and expectations. Employers have an ever-growing pool of highly qualified candidates from which to choose, and that the scale of competitiveness within the contemporary graduate recruitment market in all countries is unprecedented. Given the socio-economic and cultural variations of the four countries, leader expectations of business graduates in respect of 'hard' business skills and 'soft' social competencies were remarkably similar.

The advantages of using a business graduate in respect of the worth of discipline centered information and know-how were mentioned by several of the employers. Another key similarity in employers' expectations related to graduates' problem-solving abilities. Such talents were manifested by what employers seemed to be a capability to assume in a very vital and analytical manner. Employers in all countries expected business graduates to possess high levels of discipline specific skills synthesised with more generic interpersonal and communication competencies.

However, while several of them felt over qualified in respect of discipline centered talents, they perceived themselves as lacking the necessary level of presentation skills. It would appear so, that in order to promote business graduate employability within an increasingly competitive and global business environment, business schools need to develop programmes in which undergraduates are actively encouraged to acquire and hone 'softer' communication skills. High levels of business information by itself is deficient, excellent verbal communication skills are also necessary in order that graduates feel confident in their abilities to communicate such knowledge.

The importance of work-based learning and subsequent graduate employability is discussed in the literature (Hesketh, A. J. 2000. "Recruiting an Elite? Employer' Perceptions of Graduate) Work experience constituted an important consideration for employers in when recruiting graduates. Formal work-based learning in a very business atmosphere was known as notably valuable as a result of it increased students' learning experiences while providing them with the chance to accumulate and hone work-related skills. Part-time employment was additionally perceived absolutely as a result of it provided proof that graduates were willing to figure onerous to realize their goals and were able to balance employment and study.

In conclusion, the similarities in the demands and expectations that employers have of business graduates were remarkably homogenous. Moreover, there have been notable similarities in graduate and leader views of what is also termed 'core components' of business graduate employability: the worth of onerous business-related information and skills; the importance of sentimental business-related skills and competencies; and therefore the want for previous work-experience.

Thus, in order to promote business-graduate employability Work experience, and an ability to utilize softer business-related skills and abilities are also vital. With graduate numbers increasing on a global scale, Business schools have a responsibility to promote the employability, work readiness and mobility of their graduates. In doing so, they will produce highly qualified, flexible and employable individuals, able to meet the ever-changing demands of modern-day business.

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