MALAYSIAN GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to identify the perception of employers concerning the employability skills needed in the job market and graduates' perception of the employability skills that they currently possessed. Eleven variables that make up employability skills based on past research were examined in this study. However, only seven factors, which were the result of factor analysis, were considered. Data were collected through two different sets of questionnaires intended to gauge employers' and graduates' perceptions, respectively. The results of this study revealed that employers preferred to hire graduates from public universities. Moreover, graduates and employers placed similar importance in terms of the ranking of employability skills, where both employers and graduates perceived the order of importance of employability skills to be the same. However, there was a difference between employers' and graduates' perceptions for all seven employability factors, where employers rated graduates much lower in terms of mean rank. The results of this study also suggest that younger employers tend to be more favourable to graduates' employability skills. The higher the job position of the employer within the organization, the higher are the expectations of graduates. Finally, recommendations were also included in this study.

Key words: Employability Skills, Malaysia Graduates.

INTRODUCTION

Employability skills are not job specific, but are skills which cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer. (Sherer and Eadie 1987, p.16) “Too many young graduates leave universities without the skills, attitudes, and understanding that are necessary to successfully enter the world of work. The unemployment rates among graduates are the highest in the country. Often jobs are readily available, but these graduates lack what is needed to get and keep jobs. It seems reasonable to expect schools to teach students what they need to succeed in the world of work.” (McCoy, 1991, p. 94) “Employability skills are defined as skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions.” (DEST 2002a)

Malaysia is now said to be at the mid-point in its journey towards Vision 2020 and is transforming to become a developed nation during the second phase of a fifteen year period. Everything we see in this world today has changed tremendously in terms of technological development, and most work needs to operate globally in order to survive the competition which exists in the world these days. This change has created an impact on the nature of work where a high level use of technology is a necessity to compete in the global arena. (Jailani et al, 2006). Hence, a more flexible workforce with advanced technical skills coupled with well developed generic skills such as creative thinking, problem solving and analytical skills, is greatly needed by the employer in industry in order to meet the challenges faced by business.

Faced with stiff global competition, an arising concern is that current graduates do not match the needs of business. According to Khir (2006), graduates now are lacking in both technical know-how and generic skills. Competence is the fusion of both domains of specific knowledge and generic skills, so efforts to increase graduates’ competence must cover both areas. This has been highlighted in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (Jailani et al, 2006). Educational institutions have come under intense pressure to equip students with more than just the academic skills. A number of reports issued by employers have urged universities to make more explicit efforts to develop the ‘key’, ‘core’, ‘transferable’, ‘soft’ , ‘employable’ and/or ‘generic skills’ needed in many types of employment. Therefore it is important for educational institutions to have a working relationship with industry to meet the requirements and needs of the employers. According to Bailey, (Mitchell, 2006) “to succeed in this ever changing, increasingly competitive business environment, organizations must demand employees with competencies which will lead to a high return on the employee investment”.

From the employers’ perspective, ‘employability’ seems to refer to ‘work readiness’, that is, possession of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will enable new graduates to make productive contributions to organizational objectives soon after commencing employment (Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2006). Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job (Robinson, 2000). Employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industries, businesses, job levels from the entry-level worker to the senior most position.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Malaysian Government conducted a survey on Malaysian graduates and it was discovered that about 60,000 Malaysian Graduates were unemployed due to a lack of experience, poor English, poor communication skills and because they had pursued studies irrelevant to the market place (Malaysian Today, 2005). The research further mentioned that the typical unemployed graduate was female, mainly from the Malay ethnic group and from the lower income group. Most unemployed graduates had majored in business studies or information technology. A

total of 81 percent of the unemployed graduates had attended public universities where the medium of instruction in many courses was the Malay Language. The Ministry of Human Resource recently reported that a large number of graduates are still jobless. According to the report, 70 percent graduates of from public universities and institutions of higher learning are still unemployed. This is in contrast with 26 percent from private institutions of higher learning and 34 percent who are foreign graduates (Suresh, 2006).

It was reported that, generally, Malaysia has a sufficient supply of graduates with technical skills mainly in information, communication and technology (ICT), business, engineering and many other fields. Unfortunately, the demand for these graduates is still low despite the economic growth in the country. The obvious question that arises is what could be the factors leading to the decrease in demand for these graduates? Does this imply that many of the local institutions of higher learning, both public and private, have failed to offer a sufficiently rigorous education to produce the necessary quality in the workforce which the industry requires?

The general consensus among Malaysian employers indicates that Malaysian graduates are well trained in their areas of specialization but unfortunately they lack the 'soft skills' (Nurita, Shaharudin, Ainon, 2004). This 'deficit' in graduate skills has also been acknowledged by the UK government with respect to its graduates (Dickinson, 2000). Lawrence (2002) adds that America is also experiencing the same problem. Studies of employers have repeatedly stressed the priority which they give to 'personal transferable skills' (Dearing Committee, 1997). Employers today are looking for graduates not only with specific skills and knowledge but with the ability to be proactive enough to see and respond to problems. In Malaysia, more employers are searching for graduates who are balanced, with good academic achievement and possessing 'soft skills' such as communication skills, problem solving skills, interpersonal skills and the ability to be flexible (Nurita, Shaharudin & Ainon, 2004). These 'soft skills' (also known as employability skills) are foundation skills that apply across the board, no matter what job the employee is performing (Lawrence, 2002).

Baxter and Young (1982) have indicated that employers need entry level workers who are dependable and trustworthy, have basic communication, thinking and problem solving skills, and have the desire to learn and advance, the ability to work as part of a team, and possess a proper attitude. These skills have been defined as those needed by today's students in a report published by the US Department of Labor (2000). The report states that graduates must master employability skills, also called foundation skills, and competencies in order to find meaningful work. Foundation skills are basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities, while competencies include resource, interpersonal, information, systems, and technology competencies.

The main aim of this study is to identify those important employability skills possessed by graduates from higher education institutions which are required by employers in Malaysia. What are the major skills required by employers? Are graduates equipped with those skills? Are employers willing to hire graduates who are equipped with some of the major skills identified in the research?

Since there is a growing concern about the employability skills of graduates, this study takes on the challenge to investigate the employability skills possessed by graduating students in higher education institutions and to determine to what extent graduating students would be hired by employers. It is also in the interest of this research to study the extent to which graduates now possess the 'soft skills' with which universities have been told to equip their graduates.

During the past few years there have been a substantial number of studies conducted dealing with the employability skills that students must acquire in order to obtain and keep entry level jobs. Most of these studies have analyzed the perceptions of employees concerning the workplace skills they need in order to maintain entry level jobs. Although the information obtained from this research is extremely valuable, it is the perceptions of employers willing to hire these graduates which will provide a better insight into the skills that are now demanded.

Most of the relevant studies have been conducted in the US, which is definitely not representative of the Malaysian work place environment. The phenomenon of interest in this research is: Does the student who has successfully completed the requirements of a public education possess the skills that employers are most in need of?

Competition is a major factor that motivates industry to be more efficient and to employ strategies that will improve production, service and product quality. Because strategies require worker collaboration and teamwork, employers need creative, flexible workers who have a broad range of interpersonal and managerial skills (Mustapha & Abdullah, 2000). Past research revealed that employers looked for certain skills, behaviours and attitudes in their potential employees. Many employers preferred employees who were motivated, possessed basic skills, and had satisfied higher performance standards; who could adapt through the use of creative thinking and problem solving skills, who possessed effective personal management skills, had interpersonal, negotiating and teamwork skills that made them effective work group members, and could influence others to act through leadership skills, and had individual responsibility, self management and integrity (SCANS, 1991).

Employability, the ability of graduates to gain employment appropriate to their educational standard, was the focus of the Dearing Inquiry into higher education (Dearing, 1997). Employability was highlighted as a concern for employers, and was the focus of a major study (Harvey et. al., 1997) that was used to inform the Dearing Inquiry into graduate education. This meant employability became an issue for the providers of graduate education and also an issue for those who would be the prime beneficiaries of being employable, the graduates themselves. Employability is an issue of direct concern to students. The prime motivation in attending university for the majority of students is not to study a particular subject in depth, but to enhance their employment status (Stewart and Knowles, 2000). Therefore there is a greater need for graduates to develop and enhance their employability skills from time to time.

Employability also means that those possessing the capability to acquire the skills to do the required work may not necessarily be able to do the work immediately and without further training (Cox and King, 2006). Employers are looking for a more flexible, adaptable workforce as they themselves seek to transform their companies into being more flexible and adaptable in response to changing market needs. As quoted in a newspaper article (New Straits Times, 2005), the Human Resources Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Wira Dr Fong Chan Onn highlighted the fact that 30,000 Malaysian graduates had only managed to get casual and temporary work such as being cashiers and restaurant workers because of their poor English proficiency. This factor hinders graduates in becoming better in their jobs thus reducing their chances of brighter career prospects especially in getting jobs that are relevant to their careers.

The Multimedia Development Corporation Malaysia conducted a survey among Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status companies and found that respondents perceived Malaysian ICT graduates to be ‘average’. The graduates were generally good team players and had good learning ability, however, their major weakness was their communication skills.

One Malaysian report (Chang, 2004) claimed that the reason graduates are unemployed is that they do not have the right degree. Some graduates with specific qualifications are already abundant in the market, whereas Engineering and other Science degree graduates are still in high demand. Another reason is that graduates with a degree no longer automatically qualify for getting their first job. Instead, graduates who possess the greatest knowledge and skills in their study domain get hired first. In addition, the business world is becoming very competitive and computerization makes job performance measurement very transparent. Managers will only want to hire people who can contribute to team success. Proficiency in English, the ability to present ideas, explain issues and problems, to speak up in a constructive manner, to resolve problems, to understand issues and problems faced by companies and to come up with workable solutions to problems are all good communication and interpersonal skills sought after by employers. Therefore employees are expected to contribute from day one of being hired. (Chang, 2004).

According to a survey conducted on 3300 human resource personnel and bosses by JobStreet.com, a Malaysian employment agency, (2005), the factors relating to graduate unemployment are; Weak English – 56%; Bad social etiquette – 36%; Demand too much pay – 32%; Degrees not relevant – 30%; Fresh graduates too choosy – 23%; No vacancies – 14%. Weak English and bad social etiquette are the top reasons for graduates being unemployed. These findings show that Malaysian graduates are unemployed not because they are unintelligent but rather because most of them lack soft-skills.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this research are as follows:-

1) To identify the important graduate employability skills as perceived by employers.
2) To identify the important graduate employability skills as perceived by graduates.
3) To establish to what extent employers would hire public university graduates compared to non public university graduates.
4) To examine whether there is any significant difference between the perception of employers and the perception of graduates with regards to employability skills.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempts to answer the following questions:-

1) What are employers' perceptions of the employability skills of graduates?
2) What employability skills do graduates perceive they possess?
3) Do employers prefer to hire public university graduates or non public university graduates?
4) Is there a significant difference between the employability skills demanded by employers and the skills offered by graduates?

DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSITION

P1: There is a difference in the preference to hire public university graduates by employers.

P2: There is a difference in the ranking of employability skills between employers and graduates.

P3: Graduates and employers have different perceptions of the employability skills inherent in graduates.

P4: Employers of both genders have different perceptions of how they rate their employability skills.

P5: Employers from different ethnic groups have different perceptions of how they rate graduates' employability skills.

P6: Employers of various age groups have different perceptions of how they rate graduates' employability skills.

P7: Employers from different job positions have different perceptions of how they rate graduates' employability skills.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The primary data was collected by distributing questionnaires to fresh graduates and respective employers in organizations around the Klang Valley. Two different sets of questionnaires were distributed. The employers' set had additional questions to identify preferred graduates and their respective employability skills. Five fresh graduates and one employer per organization were sampled using convenience sampling. The number of employers who responded in the survey was 211, while 257 respondents were graduates, giving a response rate of 66% for the graduates. The response rate for employers was 53%.

Data collection for this study took place in the third quarter of July 2007. The employability skills that were surveyed (and the labels used in this study) are as follows:

- COMM: Communication Skills
- ENGLISH: English Language Proficiency
- ICT: Information, Communication and Technology Skill
- INTER: Interpersonal Skills
- TEAM: Ability to work as a team
- LEAD: Leadership Skills
- PROB: Problem Solving Skills
- ADAP: Adaptability Skills
- RISK: Risk Taking Skills
- CREA: Creativity Skills
- TIME: Personal Organisation and Time Management Skills

A five point Likert scale was employed and the respondents were required to state the extent to which they strongly agreed by giving a score of '5' or strongly disagreed by giving a score of '1' for each statement in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were personally distributed by the researcher. A follow up call was made thereafter to monitor the progress of the questionnaire. Upon completion, the researcher personally collected the questionnaire from the respective organization. Each respondent was given a token of appreciation on the return of the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were mailed to former students (in which case, the universities provided the researcher with the contact details of their fresh graduates).

FINDINGS

Table 1 describes the demographic profile of the graduates who responded to this survey. The majority were female (54.10%), with a Malay ethnic background (47.90%), between 20-30 years of age (86.80%), working in areas that are related to their field of study (64.2%), graduates of public universities (46.3%), and currently working in the Finance, Banking, Insurance and Services industry (40.9%).

Table 1

Graduates' Demographic Profile (n=257)

Graduate Profile	Classification	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	118	45.9
	Female	139	54.1
Ethnic Background	Malay	123	47.9
	Chinese	54	21.0
	Indian	60	23.3
	Others	20	7.8
Age	Less than 20	2	0.8
	20 – 30	223	86.8
	31 – 40	28	10.9
	41 – 50	4	1.6
Present job related to field of study	Yes	165	64.2
	No	92	35.8
Type of Educational Institution	Public University	119	46.3
	Local Private University	103	40.1
	Local Foreign Private University College	12	4.7
	Foreign University	19	7.4
	Others	4	1.6
Background of Industry	Manufacturing, Construction	23	8.9
	Wholesale, Retailing	30	11.7
	Finance, Banking, Insurance & Services	105	40.9
	Transport, Storage & Communications	27	10.5
	Others	72	28.0

Table 2

Employers' Demographic Profile (n=211)

Employers' Profile	Classification	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	129	61.1
	Female	82	38.9
Ethnic Background	Malay	66	31.3
	Chinese	50	23.7
	Indian	72	34.1
	Others	23	10.9
Age	Less than 20	3	1.4
	20-30	58	27.5
	31-40	97	46.0
	41 and above	53	25.1
Nature of Company	Government Agency	11	5.2
	Private Company	136	64.5
	Multinational Company	48	22.7
	Others	16	7.6
Highest Academic Qualification	SPM/Diploma	51	24.2
	Degree	124	58.8
	Masters	31	14.7
	Others	5	2.4
Years of Experience	Less than 3	38	18.0
	3-6	46	21.8
	7-9	25	11.8
	9 and above	102	48.3
Background of Industry	Manufacturing, Construction	21	10.0
	Wholesale, Retailing	27	12.8
	Finance, Banking, Insurance & Services	82	38.9
	Transport, Storage & Communications	20	9.5
	Others	61	28.9

Table 2 shows the demographic background of the employers who participated in this study. A majority of the employers were male (61.1%), from the Indian ethnic group (34.1%), between 31 and 40 years old (46%), from private companies (64.5%), had degrees (58.8%), had nine and above years of working experience (48.3%), and were from the finance, banking, insurance and services industry (38.9%).

Data Normality and Missing Values

The data collected were subject to normality tests and the results showed both the skewness and kurtosis were not within the range of +2 to -2 hence the data were not normally distributed.

Internal Validity

Factor analysis was conducted on the 56 items included in the questionnaire, which generated a reduced number of factors. The KMO test for overall employability skills for both graduates and employers yielded a score of 0.96, which is considered a marvelous degree of common variance.

Table 3 describes the rotated component matrix, which resulted in seven factors with their respective total percentages of variance explained. PROB had the highest total of variance explained with a total of 42.83%. HUMAN (consisting of INTER and TEAM) had a total percentage of variance explained of 7.96%,

Table 3

Rotated Component Matrix

Factor	Rotated Component Matrix(a)	Total percentage of variance explained
1.	PROB & ADAP	42.83%
2.	HUMAN	7.96%
3.	ENGLISH	4.05%
4.	ICT	3.70%
5.	TIME	2.70%
6.	LEAD	2.31%
7.	COMM	2.05%
		65.59%

The sum of eigenvalues associated with the seven factors was 65.59%. The Cronbach alpha or internal consistency score for the seven factors was not less than 0.8: PROB & ADAP (0.86), HUMAN (0.81), TIME (0.81), ENGLISH (0.84), ICT (0.80), LEAD (0.81) and COMM (0.84).

Graduates' and Employers' Mean Scores

Table 4

Graduates' and Employers' Mean Scores

Employability Skills	Graduates' Mean Score	Employers' Mean Score
COM M	4.23	3.72
ENGLISH	4.30	3.85
ICT	4.39	4.17
INTER	4.42	3.98
TEAM	4.39	4.01
LEAD	4.18	3.48
PROB	4.11	3.48
ADAP	4.14	3.62
RISK	4.11	3.56
CREA	4.04	3.53
TIME	4.33	3.70

Graduates (n = 257)
Employers (n = 211)

The summary for the mean rating on perceived employability skills of the graduates and employers is illustrated in Table 4. The average mean score indicates that the graduates rated their employability skills as being relatively high. For example, the results can be interpreted as meaning that the graduates strongly perceive that they have a higher capacity in grasping and using the English language (4.30) and consider themselves competent in ICT (4.39).

The mean score of employers' perception of graduates' employability skills is lower than that for the graduates. For example, for the COMM factor, the average mean score of employers was 3.72, while the graduates' mean score was 4.23. However, the highest mean score for employers was ICT (4.17), as most employers perceive that graduates these days are fully equipped with sufficient ICT knowledge and skills especially in using email, internet and Microsoft office. TEAM skill had an average mean score of 4.01. Most organizations require their employees to work in teams at some point in time, therefore graduates are trained immediately as they join the organization to work as part of a team. It is a possibility that graduates with past exposure to working in teams for project assignments during their tertiary education are able to adapt and adjust themselves well in the organizations' team working environment. This clearly is an added advantage for graduates and an essential skill required by most employers.

Analysis of Measure

There were 56 statements in Section B of the questionnaire. Tests of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity resulted in the correlation matrix presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Correlation matrix for employability skills (n=176)

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.963
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	21052.764
	df	1540
	Sig.	.000

The KMO test for overall employability skills for both graduates and employers yielded a score of 0.96, which is considered a marvelous degree of common variance (Morgan, 2006).

The Varimax rotation method was chosen to uncover a more meaningful pattern of item factor loadings. Table 6 displays the total variance explained in eight stages. At the initial stage, it shows the factors and their associated eigenvalues, percentage of variance explained and the cumulative percentage. In reference to the eigenvalues, eight factors were extracted because they had eigenvalues greater than 1 with 67.4% of the variance explained.

Table 6

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	23.982	42.825	42.825	23.982	42.825	42.825	11.187	19.976	19.976
2	4.457	7.959	50.784	4.457	7.959	50.784	6.397	11.423	31.399
3	2.269	4.051	54.835	2.269	4.051	54.835	4.484	8.006	39.405
4	2.070	3.696	58.531	2.070	3.696	58.531	4.273	7.631	47.036
5	1.513	2.701	61.232	1.513	2.701	61.232	4.123	7.362	54.398
6	1.291	2.306	63.538	1.291	2.306	63.538	3.016	5.386	59.783
7	1.149	2.051	65.589	1.149	2.051	65.589	2.753	4.915	64.699
8	1.009	1.801	67.390	1.009	1.801	67.390	1.507	2.691	67.390

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

In Table 7a and Table 7b, the output in SPSS has been derived from eight components. Each factor loading in Tables 7a and 7b below is a measure of the importance of the variable in measuring each factor.

Table 7a

Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix(a)	**1**	**2**
1. Problem solving and Adaptability skills		
Recognizes alternate routes in meeting objectives	0.77	
Monitors progress toward objectives in risky ventures	0.77	
Identifies potential negative outcomes when considering risky venture	0.74	
Takes reasonable job related risks	0.69	
Is able to adapt to different situations.	0.67	
Is able to cope with uncertainty	0.65	
Accepts challenging assignments.	0.65	
Prefers taking up new challenges and responsibilities.	0.65	
Is able to identify and suggest alternative ways to achieve goals and get the job done	0.64	
Is able to adapt to changes	0.64	
Adapts to situations of change	0.64	
Initiates change to enhance productivity	0.63	
Is creative and makes suggestions to improve the job.	0.63	
Gathers facts and information in finding the solution for problems.	0.61	
Finds effective ways of solving problems.	0.59	
Is successful in resolving conflicts with others.	0.58	
Solves problems without getting assistance from others.	0.53	
Provides novel solutions to problems.	0.53	
Is able to identify problems	0.50	
2. Human skills		
Enjoys the 'give and take' policy or working in group.		0.74
Is willing to follow the norms and standards of the group		0.72
Enjoys working as part of a team.		0.72
Gets along easily with people		0.70
Works cooperatively with others		0.69
Places team goals ahead of own goals.		0.67
Cooperates with fellow workers.		0.64
Is able to listen to other people's opinions		0.64
Empathizes with others		0.59
Communicates well with others		0.57
Percentage of variance explained	**42.83%**	**7.96%**
	50.79%	

Table 7b

Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix(a)	3	4	5	6	7
3. English Language Proficiency and Literacy skills					
Has no problem in speaking English to others.	0.80				
Does not shy away from using the English language when communicating.	0.79				
Is able to communicate with colleagues in English	0.75				
Speaks and writes clearly so that others understand.	0.55				
Listens and asks questions in order to understand instructions and views of others	0.54				
Can create documents such as letters, directions, reports, graphs and flow charts in English	0.40				
4. ICT skills					
ICT knowledge using the Internet		0.84			
ICT knowledge in word processing		0.84			
ICT knowledge in using email		0.82			
ICT knowledge in spreadsheet		0.78			
ICT knowledge in handling presentations		0.76			
5. Personal organization and Time management skills					
Allocates time efficiently			0.72		
Is able to meet deadlines			0.70		
Uses time & materials to the best advantage of the company			0.61		
Is able to arrive to work on time			0.60		
Completes work in a thorough manner.			0.59		
Is able to meet identified standard when performing a job			0.58		
Usually sets priorities			0.57		
6. Leadership skills					
Gives direction and guidance to others				0.67	
Has the ability to lead people.				0.65	
Is able to delegate work to peers				0.59	
Is able to motivate others to work for a common goal.				0.53	
Is willing to take ownership and responsibility for the job.				0.48	
7. Communication skills					
Makes effective presentations.					0.63
Is able to put up a good logical argument to persuade others.					0.57
Is able to express ideas verbally, one to one or to groups.					0.49
Percentage of variance explained	**4.05%**	**3.70%**	**2.70%**	**2.31%**	**2.05%**
			14.81%		

Factor one appeared to measure problem solving and adaptability skills, with a total variance explained of 42.83%. Factor two appeared to measure human skills consisting of two important skills i.e. Interpersonal and team player skills and factor three, English Language proficiency and literacy skills, with a total variance explained of 7.96% and 4.05% respectively. Factor four appeared to measure ICT, factor five, personal organization and time management skills, and factor six, leadership skills. Their total variance explained were 3.70%, 2.70%, and 2.31%, respectively. Communication skills, which is factor seven, appeared to have a total variance of 2.05%.

The item describing the ability to understand written information in books and documents such as manuals, graphs and schedules written in English was the only item loaded into the eighth factor. As it represented only 1.8% of the total variance explained, it was excluded as a factor to be considered in this study. Hence, only 7 factors were considered for analysis. The sum of eigenvalues associated with each of the seven factors was 65.59%.

Table 8 presents part of the item analysis output for the multi-item scales of respondents' employability skills. The summated score for the seven factors is shown below.

Table 8

Internal consistency of employability skills (n= 468)

Constructs and Items	**Cronbach's Alpha**
PROB AND ADAP	0.86
HUMAN	0.81
TIME	0.81
ENGLISH	0.84
ICT	0.80
LEAD	0.81
COMM	0.84

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient explains the internal consistency of the items in the scales; the closer it is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. The alpha levels for factors 1 and 2 were 0.86 and 0.81, respectively. Factors 3, 4, and 5 showed levels of 0.81, 0.84 and 0.80, respectively. According to the rule-of-thumb given by George and Mallery (2003), more than 0.80 is good, more than 0.70 acceptable, while more than 0.60 is questionable. Factors 6 and 7 obtained an alpha of 0.81 and 0.84 respectively. Since all seven factors had an alpha of above 0.80, the factors are rated as being good in terms of consistency.

Testing of Propositions

P1: There is a difference in the preference to hire public university graduates by employers.

Table 9

Mann-Whitney tests on employers' preference to hire public university graduates based on their employability skills (n = 211)

		Mean Rank		Statistics		
Employability skills factors	**n**	**Public Uni**	**Non Public**	**Mann-Whitney U**	**Z**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)**
PROB AND ADAP	211	117.28	96.22	4432	-2.499	0.012*
HUMAN	211	115.26	97.97	4630	-2.065	0.039*
TIME	211	115.32	97.92	4624	-2.071	0.038*
ENGLISH	211	118.31	95.33	4331	-2.743	0.006*
ICT	211	115.07	98.13	4648	-2.063	0.039*
LEAD	211	115.81	97.49	4575.50	-2.185	0.029*
COMM	211	119.63	94.18	4201	-3.052	0.002*

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

The Mann-Whitney tests were carried out for all of the employability skills to find out if there were significant differences between employer preference to hire public university graduates and preference to hire non public university graduates (private and foreign university graduates). SPSS calculated the value U, which represents the amount by which the ranks for both groups deviate from what we would expect if the proposition could not be upheld.

In testing the employability skills above for both groups, the two-tailed significance value for all of the skills was less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), therefore it can be concluded that there was a notable difference between the distribution of ranks between public university and non public university graduates. The mean rank for public university graduates was generally higher compared to non public university graduates for all of the skills. The proposition is supported that there is a difference in preference between hiring local public university graduates and hiring non public university graduates.

P2: There is a difference in the ranking of employability skills factors between employers and graduates.

Table 10 presents the summated scores of the seven factors where the highest ranking denotes the factor that graduates feel they possessed the most. The highest perceived factor was 'PROB and ADAP', followed by 'HUMAN, INTER and TIME. The factor that was ranked the lowest was 'LEAD' and 'COMM'.

Table 10

Graduates' summated scores of employability skills (n = 257)

Employability Skills	N	Sum scores	Rank
PROB AND ADAP	257	18690	1
HUMAN	257	10687	2
TIME	257	7262	3
ENGLISH	257	6342	4
ICT	257	5395	5
LEAD	257	4984	6
COMM	257	2972	7

Table 11 below shows the employers' summated scores of the employability skills of graduates. It should be noted that both graduates and employers had similar perceptions in the rankings of importance in terms of employability skill factors. Since it is perfectly correlated in terms of a perfect match between graduates' and employers' opinions, the research did not proceed with Pearson correlation analysis. Hence, Proposition 2 that states that there is a significant difference between both perceptions, is not supported.

Table 11

Employers' summated scores of employability skills (n = 211)

Employability Skills	N	Sum scores	Rank
PROB AND ADAP	211	13066	1
HUMAN	211	7962	2
TIME	211	4934	3
ENGLISH	211	4504	4
ICT	211	4152	5
LEAD	211	3379	6
COMM	211	2108	7

P3: Graduates and employers have different perceptions about the employability skills inherent in graduates.

Table 12

Mann-Whitney tests on employability skills between graduates and employers (n = 468)

Employability skills factors	n	Mean Rank		Statistics		
		Graduates	Employers	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
PROB AND ADAP	468	288.71	168.47	13180.50	-9.58	0.00
HUMAN	468	274.10	186.26	16935.50	-7.03	0.00
TIME	468	290.60	166.17	12696.50	-9.96	0.00
ENGLISH	468	273.82	186.61	17008.50	-7.01	0.00
ICT	468	260.49	202.84	20434	-4.69	0.00
LEAD	468	284.92	173.09	14156	-8.97	0.00
COMM	468	269.71	191.62	18065	-6.34	0.00

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

Mann-Whitney tests for all of the employability skills were carried out to find out if there were significant differences in distribution between the two groups. Results show that in all particular items for all seven employability skills, both graduates and employers have significantly different perceptions about the skills inherent in graduates ($p<0.05$). Although the factors were ranked the same in terms of importance, the degree of the factor is significantly different between what graduates provide and what employers require.

As shown in Table 12, employers have ranked the graduates lower in terms of all the skills. The graduates have self-rated themselves and this resulted in much higher ratings for all of the skills. TIME was rated the highest by graduates (Mean Rank = 290.60, U = 12696.50, $p < 0.05$) while the employers rated ICT skills with the highest mean rank (Mean Rank = 202.84, U = 20434, $p<0.05$). Therefore, Proposition 3 which states that graduates and employers have different perceptions about the employability skills inherent in graduates is supported.

7.6 Analysis of Employers

P4: Employers of both genders have different perceptions of how they rate employability skills.

Table 13

Employers' 'Gender' and 'Employability Skills'

	PROB	HUMAN	ENGLISH	ICT	TIME	LEAD	COMM
Mann-Whitney U	5100	5170	4961.50	4926.50	5149.00	5141.00	5239.00
Z	-0.437	-0.277	-0.762	-0.861	-0.325	-0.344	-0.117
Asymp. Sig.	0.662	0.782	0.446	0.389	0.745	0.731	0.907

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

The Mann Whiney test was carried out to find out if employers of both genders have any significant differences in their perceptions of how they rate their graduates. The two-tailed significance value for all skills, as shown in Table 13 is (p>0.05), for PROB & ADAP (p=0.662), HUMAN (p=0.782), ENGLISH (p=0.446), ICT skills (p=0.389), TIME (p=0.745), LEAD (p=0.731) and COMM (p=0.907). Therefore it can be concluded that there was no notable difference between employability skills and the gender of the employer. Hence, Proposition 4 is not supported. It can be concluded that both male and female gender groups have similar opinions on graduates' employability skills.

P5: Employers of various ethnic groups have different perceptions of how they rate graduates' employability skills.

Table 14

Employers' Ethnic groups and 'Employability Skills'

	PROB	HUMAN	ENGLISH	ICT	TIME	LEAD	COMM
Chi-Square	5.772	3.994	4.738	10.618	4.658	3.306	8.783
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.123	0.262	0.192	0.014*	0.199	0.347	0.032*

* Significant at p < 0.05

The results in Table 14 show that Proposition 5 (P5) was partially supported, as there were only two skills in particular that were significantly different i.e. the ICT skill and COMM skill. The ICT skill had a chi-square value of 4.658 (3 degrees of freedom) with a p<0.05 (p=0.014) and COMM skill had a p value of 0.032 (with 8.783 as the chi-square value).

A Kruskal Wallis test was further carried out to identify which ethnic group among the employers created the differences.

Table 15

Employers' Kruskal Wallis test for 'Ethnic groups' and 'ICT Skill' (n = 211)

Statistics

Kruskal Wallis

			ICT Skill		
Ethnic groups	**n**	**Mean Rank**	**Chi-square**	**df**	**Asymp. Sig**
Malay	66	115.87	10.618	3	0.014*
Chinese	50	114.41			
Indian	72	92.54			
Others	23	101.52			

* Significant at p < 0.05

The Kruskal Wallis test, as shown in Table 15, aims to determine if differences in ethnic group exist for the ICT factor. The number of respondents from the Indian ethnic group was the largest compared to the rest of the group. The mean rank for those from the Malay ethnic group was the highest (115.87), followed by Chinese (114.41), Others (101.52), and Indians (92.54). The results show that there is a significant difference between the ethnic groups and the factor (chi-square 10.618) at p=0.014 (p<0.05). The Malay ethnic group ranked graduates slightly more favorably than the Chinese, while the Indians had the lowest mean rank. Hence, there is a significant difference in opinion about graduates' ICT skills among the four different groups.

Table 16

Employers' Kruskal Wallis test for 'Ethnic groups' and 'Communication Skill' (n = 211)

Statistics

Kruskal Wallis

			COMM Skill		
Ethnic groups	**n**	**Mean Rank**	**Chi-square**	**df**	**Asymp. Sig**
Malay	66	123.17	8.793	3	0.032*
Chinese	50	98.81			
Indian	72	94.32			
Others	23	108.93			

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

The Kruskal Wallis test as shown in Table 16 indicates that there is a significant difference between various ethnic groups in the organization and their perception of graduates' communication skills. The results show that there is a significant difference between ethnic groups with regard to graduates' communication skills (chi-square 8.793) at p=0.032 (p<0.05). The Malays had the highest mean rank (123.17), followed by Others (108.93) and Chinese (98.81), while the lowest was the Indian ethnic group (94.32). To conclude, the Malay ethnic group seemed to perceive graduates more favourably in terms of their communication skills. Hence, there is a significant difference in opinion concerning Communication Skills among the four different ethnic groups.

P6: Employers of various age groups have different perceptions of how they rate graduates' employability skills.

Table 17

Employers' 'Age Groups' and 'Employability Skills'

	PROB	**HUMAN**	**ENGLISH**	**ICT**	**TIME**	**LEAD**	**COMM**
Chi-Square	9.483	0.502	6.381	1.943	7.984	7.720	6.046
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.024*	0.918	0.094**	0.584	0.046*	0.052*	0.109

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

The test between employers' age group and graduates' employability skills was also carried out and the results are shown in Table 17. The findings show that only three skills produced a significant result, PROB & ADAP (p=0.024), TIME (p=0.046), and LEAD (p= 0.052). Other skills such as HUMAN (p=0.918), ICT (p=0.584), COMM (p=0.109) and ENGLISH (p=0.094) were not found to have produced any significant results. Hence, Proposition 6 (P6) is partially supported.

Table 18

Kruskal Wallis test for employers' age group and 'Problem Solving and Adaptability Skills' (n = 211)

Statistics					
Kruskal Wallis					
			PROB Skills		
Age Ranges	**n**	**Mean Rank**	**Chi-square**	**df**	**Asymp. Sig**
Less than 20	3	133.33	9.483	3	0.024*
20-30	78	121.19			
31-40	77	100.07			
41>	53	90.72			

* Significant at p < 0.05

Table 19

Kruskal Wallis test for employers' age group and 'Time Management Skills' (n = 211)

Statistics					
Kruskal Wallis					
			TIME Skills		
Age Ranges	**n**	**Mean Rank**	**Chi-square**	**Df**	**Asymp. Sig**
Less than 20	3	135.67	7.984	3	0.046*
20-30	78	119.79			
31-40	77	100.01			
41>	53	92.73			

* Significant at p < 0.05

Table 20

Kruskal Wallis test for employers' age group and 'Leadership Skills' (n = 211)

Statistics					
Kruskal Wallis					
			LEAD Skills		
Age Ranges	**n**	**Mean Rank**	**Chi-square**	**Df**	**Asymp. Sig**
Less than 20	3	130.67	7.720	3	0.052*
20-30	78	116.53			
31-40	77	107.03			
41>	53	87.60			

* Significant at p < 0.05

The test of the relationship between PROB, TIME and LEAD skills and employers' age group was also carried out using the Kruskal Wallis test, as shown in Tables 18, 19 and 20, respectively. The highest mean rank was for the group with the lowest age group that is, 20 and below. The mean rank for the 20–30 age group had a mean rank of 121.19, followed by the 31-40 age group, (100.07) and the lowest mean rank was for the highest age group of above 41 (81.60). This significant relationship at (p=0.024), had a chi-square statistic of 9.483 and explained that there were significant differences between the age groups and for the three factors as highlighted above. Hence, this suggests that the younger the employer the more this factor is ranked favourably for the graduate. This could possibly be due to employers from a higher age group tending to expect more of graduates compared to the lower age group.

P7: Employers with various job positions have different perceptions of how they rate graduates' employability skills.

Table 21

Employers' 'Job Position' and 'Employability Skills'

	PROB	**HUMAN**	**ENGLISH**	**ICT**	**TIME**	**LEAD**	**COMM**
Chi-Square	8.230	8.381	15.016	2.914	10.052	5.046	8.866
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.041*	0.039*	0.002*	0.405	0.018*	0.168	0.031*

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

'Job position' of the employer was tested against employability skills, as indicated by Proposition 7 (P7). The chi-square was the highest (15.016) for English Language Proficiency with 3 degrees of freedom. Table 21 shows that there was a strong association between employability skills and employers' job position for the following skills; problem solving (p=0.041), human skills (p=0.039), English proficiency (p=0.002), time management (p=0.018), and communication skills (p=0.031). All the skills were perceived to be significantly different since the p value was below the 0.05 level. Hence, P7 is supported since there is a significant difference between employers' job position and graduates' employability skills. It can be suggested that employers at different job position levels perceive graduates' employability skills differently.

Further analysis was done between PROB, HUMAN, ENGLISH, TIME and COMM and employers' job positions, as shown in Tables 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26, respectively. The Kruskal Wallis test was carried out to determine to what extent there existed significant differences between the different employers' job positions and the selected skills. The results shown in the tables indicate that the mean rank decreases as the employer's job position increases, with Supervisors having the highest mean ranks (132.54 for PROB; 125.33 for HUMAN; 134.76 for ENGLISH; 129.89 for TIME; 124.87 for COMM).

Table 22

Employers Kruskal Wallis test for 'Job Position' and 'Problem Solving Skills'(n = 211)

Statistics					
Kruskal Wallis					
			PROB		
Job Position	**n**	**Mean Rank**	**Chi-square**	**Df**	**Asymp. Sig**
Top Management	65	97.48	8.230	3	0.041*
Middle Management	76	102.66			
Supervisor	35	132.54			
Others	35	102.54			

* Significant at p < 0.05

Table 23

Employers Kruskal Wallis test for 'Job Position' and 'Human Skills'(n = 211)

Statistics					
Kruskal Wallis					
			HUMAN		
Job Position	**n**	**Mean Rank**	**Chi-square**	**Df**	**Asymp. Sig**
Top Management	65	107.28	8.381	3	0.039*
Middle Management	76	106.34			
Supervisor	35	125.33			
Others	35	83.57			

* Significant at p < 0.05

Table 24

Employers Kruskal Wallis test for 'Job Position' and 'English Proficiency'(n = 211)

Statistics					
Kruskal Wallis					
			ENGLISH		
Job Position	**n**	**Mean Rank**	**Chi-square**	**Df**	**Asymp. Sig**
Top Management	65	91.78	15.016	3	0.002*
Middle Management	76	112.65			
Supervisor	35	134.76			
Others	35	89.21			

* Significant at p < 0.05

Table 25

Employers Kruskal Wallis test for 'Job Position' and 'Time Management'(n = 211)

Statistics

Kruskal Wallis

Job Position	n	Mean Rank	TIME Chi-square	Df	Asymp. Sig
Top Management	65	91.75	10.052	3	0.018*
Middle Management	76	110.88			
Supervisor	35	129.89			
Others	35	97.97			

* Significant at p < 0.05

Table 26

Employers Kruskal Wallis test for 'Job Position' and 'Communication Skills'(n = 211)

Statistics

Kruskal Wallis

Job Position	n	Mean Rank	COMM Chi-square	Df	Asymp. Sig
Top Management	65	91.71	8.866	3	0.031*
Middle Management	76	113.39			
Supervisor	35	124.87			
Others	35	97.61			

* Significant at p < 0.05

It can be concluded that first level management is comprised of supervisors, who are the ones most commonly working with fresh graduates compared to the rest of the group. Therefore they might have a better understanding of graduates' capabilities in terms of their selected skills. The top management maintains high expectations of graduates.

DISCUSSION OF THE MAJOR FINDING

One interesting finding is that there is a significant difference in perception in relation to the hiring of local graduates compared to non public university graduates. Employers prefer to hire graduates from public universities as they perceive these graduates to have the necessary academic qualifications and employability skills perceived to be important in the current job environment. There could be a possibility that many foreign graduates do not secure jobs as readily as local public universities graduates. The number of graduates leaving the public university is larger. Generally employers who have hired graduates from a public university are satisfied and happy with their graduates.

It has been a tradition in Malaysia that most secondary education leavers prefer to pursue their education in a local university rather than a private university. This could possibly be due to the

cost factor, the environment and the facilities available at current local universities. In short, public universities get the crème of the students, especially in terms of their academic background. Therefore, since the availability of local public graduates is greater, the preference to hire these graduates seems to be significantly different.

It was noted in this research that graduates and employers perceived similarly the rankings in importance of employability skills. All seven factors were rated in exactly the same order. It can be concluded that both employers and graduates perceive the order of employability skills to be exactly the same. This is indeed, in the opinion of the researcher, an interesting discovery. Employers and graduates agree that all of the employability skills identified in this research are true and correct, and in the same order of importance as identified by the researcher.

The research was intended to identify if there are any differences in perspective with respect to the employability skills inherent in graduates. It should be noted that, in the study, there was a difference between employer and graduate perceptions for all seven employability factors since all seven factors had a significance value of below $p<0.05$. It can be argued that, since the graduates self-rated themselves, there is a possibility of self-rating bias where graduates had the perception that they were well equipped with all of the seven important employability skills. The score results were much higher than the ones given by the employers. Employers rated the graduates much lower in terms of mean rank. This could be due to employers' having reasonably higher expectations of their graduates.

Demographic test analysis was carried out for each relevant proposition and it can be concluded that where employers from different age levels were concerned, the younger the employer the more favourably they perceived their graduates. They were more satisfied with their graduates' employability skills. The older the employer the higher the expectations placed on the graduates especially in terms of their employability skills.

The higher a particular employer is in terms of his/her position within the organization, the higher is his/her expectations of graduates. This could probably be due to his/her greater level of experience within the organization and his/her tendency to expect graduates to be capable of all the skills required by the organization.

In terms of ethnic group, the Malay employer rated graduates more favourably in terms of their ICT skills and communication skills compared to other groups. This could be due to the lower expectations and standards required of graduates by Malays. The younger the employer the more favourable was his/her perception of graduates' employability skills.

SUGGESTION FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

There should be efforts to minimize the gap between employers' and graduates' perceptions by having employers and educational institutions working hand in hand in projects, assignments, providing talks to graduates courtesy of organizations and providing a longer practical training duration, for example more than 3 months, to better groom graduates according to employers' requirements.

Sabbatical leave should be given to lecturers to work in industry and organizations for better exposure in the academic environment. As part of the corporate social responsibility of corporations and to give exposure to students, field trips should be organized to factories and large organizations.

Throughout this study a great deal of emphasis was placed on the perceptions of graduate students who have directly entered the workforce and overall employers' perceptions concerning the basic employability skills that the graduates possess. A similar study could be conducted in

the future with graduates and respective employers matching sets of graduates and particular graduates. This study focused on organizations located in the Petaling Jaya and Kuala Lumpur area. A similar study could be carried out comparing the perceptions of students and their employers concerning basic employability skills using a larger sample group throughout other states in the country. The perceptions of employers may vary with the type of work experience and environment.

An extremely interesting study might be the comparison of the perceptions of employers of students from vocational and technical institutions, or any other educational institution, with the perceptions of employers of students who are not from any of these institutions concerning the basic employability skills which students possess upon graduating from a particular educational institution.

The results indicate that there are areas that need to be improved in order to ensure graduates are employable in the future. Course contents and methods of learning at educational institutions can be improved and revised. Graduates must change their attitude to adopt continuous learning exposure in order to be comparable with other graduates.

Many researchers have offered recommendations for increasing students' and employees' acquisition of employability skills. These are itemized below, listed by the groups to whom the recommendations are made. They are drawn from Berryman (1988, 1989); Bhaerman and Spill (1988); Greathouse (1986); Kazis and Barton (1993); Lankard (1990); Neal (1983); SCANS (1992); Spill and Tracy (1992); Stasz, et al. (1990, 1992); and Wentling (1987b).

Policymakers;

1. Establish as a top-priority national goal that every student should complete school possessing sufficient employability skills to earn a decent living.
2. Require all funded government universities and schools to include components for teaching employability skills.
3. Encourage and support continued experimentation with and learning from diverse programmes linking schools, employers and young entrepreneurs.
4. Direct government resources toward: (a) increasing teachers' capacity to teach employability skills, and (b) engaging participation of the private sector in providing learning opportunities for students at worksites.
5. Establish a national assessment that will permit educational institutions to certify the levels of employability competencies their students have achieved.

Schools/Universities Administrators;

1. Establish programmes which are long-term and in-depth, beginning with career awareness activities in schools.
2. Include the development of employability skills among the explicitly stated school goals.
3. Structure programmes in keeping with local needs e.g. programmes should reflect the kinds of employers in the community and local preferences for kinds of employer-school interaction.
4. Extend teachers considerable latitude for structuring their curriculum, classroom design and instructional approaches.
5. Provide teachers support including setting up summer internships, offering common preparation periods to plan interdisciplinary projects and hiring teachers for planning/professional development over the summer. Many resources should be devoted to teacher training and staff development (SCANS 1992, p.9).
6. Encourage the use of performance assessments and the information they provide to develop student "employability profiles" that students can share with prospective employers.

Teachers/Educators;

1. Arrange the classroom in such a way that it replicates key features of actual work settings and assign students tasks similar to those performed by workers in those settings.
2. Reinforce to students that employers value basic, higher-order, and affective

employability skills highly even more highly than job specific technical skills.

3. Communicate to students that they have the ability to perform tasks successfully and that they are expected to do so; provide monitoring and encouragement to help them achieve success.
4. Demand good deportment in the classroom. This conveys high expectations and familiarizes students with workplace norms.
5. Express work values through classroom instruction. Model attention to quality, thoroughness and a positive attitude.
6. Utilize democratic instructional strategies such as role playing/simulation, problem solving exercises, and group discussion with students: keep the use of lectures and reward structures to a minimum.
7. Monitor and support students' work as a consultant or master craftsman would, relating to them as intelligent, promising employees and providing them guidance and feedback.
8. Adapt instructional strategies to the tasks being taught and to the students performing; do not hold rigidly to texts and syllabus.
9. Individualize instruction as much as possible, making use of a range of materials in different media in response to students' differing learning styles.
10. Reach agreements with supervisors at learning sites so that the importance of employability skill development will be emphasized at both school and workplace.
11. Help students to build employability 'profiles' or 'portfolios' that provide a more accurate picture of the students command of the skills and traits employers value.
12. Participate in professional development activities and/or enrol in classes that emphasize methods to teach employability skills.

Employers;

1. Take steps to establish the standards of quality and high performance that now characterize our most competitive companies.
2. Develop internal training programmes to equip present employees with the full range of basic, higher order and affective employability skills.
3. Continue to communicate to schools the critical importance of instilling employability skills in students.
4. Collaborate with local schools to provide learning experiences that will foster students' development of employability skills.

Future research should target a larger population involving other states in Malaysia, employers from various different industries, in comparison with graduates from public and private universities. The study should also obtain a sufficient sample with a longer time frame. A pilot study should be conducted prior to the large scale study to ensure the reliability of the survey instrument. It would be better if more researchers could be involved in this study so as to analyze which factors are more significant in influencing graduates' perception and employers' perception of employability skills.

Research should be undertaken to determine whether the employability skills of job applicants can be used to predict their success in a job. Other possible research could be conducted to find out the relationship between career maturity and the employability skills of graduates from different educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

The job market in general is so competitive that we need to do more than just present our background and qualifications. Graduates tend to fail because they never display or communicate their employability skills, only presenting their factual credentials. Employers place a premium on graduates who can move between various challenges and assignments drawing upon these skills.

As Bhaerman and Spill (1988, p.44) conclude: when carefully structured and thoughtfully conceived, employability skills development enables all individuals young and old to develop the

needed self confidence and motivation to meet successfully the challenges of work, to survive, and most importantly to flourish.

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