

(Building Health Administration Graduates Employability Through Extra Curriculum Activities: a review)

[Saadiah J. S, Abdul K. O, Shahril M.B]

Abstract— this article draws together the evidence through a review of the literature regarding the effectiveness of extra-curriculum activities (ECA) in building graduate's employability attributes. The electronic databases searched including the following: Web of Science, Proquest, ScienceDirect, PubMed and Wiley. The study finds that the development of ECA in higher education in order to build graduate's employability attributes needs more considerations. This study indicates that continued investment in research in this area is needed. Also ongoing long-term evaluation is necessary to provide evidence about the effectiveness of ECA to build graduates employability.

Keywords— systematic review; employability attributes; extracurricular activities; higher education, career

Introduction

Previous studies on graduate's employability suggest that graduates employability has its roots in 'employability skills' and a degree alone is not enough⁽¹⁰⁾. A review of literature suggests that employability is about the work and the ability of being marketable in the industry. In other words, employability is about being skilled at getting and realizes career opportunities. As such, it is considered as a dynamic concept, referring to the condition of the potential of obtaining and building a fulfilling career through continuous development of skills that can be applied from one employer to another⁽¹⁶⁾.

Although employability does not necessarily confirm real employment, yet it enhances an individual likelihood of gaining employment. For many graduates employability is simply about getting a job after finishing schools without knowing or pays less attention on the required skills demanded by industries. Thus to cater the problem, higher institution established own "Student Employability Unit" to fill the gap.

Saadiah J. S/Faculty of Business Management

University Teknologi MARA
Malaysia

Abdul K. O (Dr.)/ Faculty of Business Management

University Teknologi MARA
Malaysia

Shahril M.B / Faculty of Business Management

University Teknologi MARA
Malaysia

I. Employability in Higher Institution

Current practice to interpret graduates employability range from the use of simple measures, to name here whether or not a graduate has get employed 6 months after finishing school (using graduate employability surveys)⁽¹¹⁾. This is based on the mission of National Education that is:

"To produce competent graduates in order to fulfill national and international manpower needs with 75% of the graduates employed in their relevant fields within six months of their graduation"⁽¹⁶⁾. If employability is measured using the above method, perhaps it may only provide a very unclear and imprecise suggestion of what the student has gained within the limitation they may have experience (i.e: economic status). Prior to judge how fast they may secure the job, maybe measurement need to be made on whether or not the graduate is applying the skills, ability, content knowledge and understanding learned and gained in their degree studies in a "graduate level job". Thus, in turn provides an opportunity for higher institution about what exactly a "graduate level job" requires therefore to modify learning outcome if necessary. It is learnt that there are so a long way to employability than securing employment. Otherwise, the next debate should highlight whether the employability skills must be molded since secondary schools instead.

Graduates are employable to the extent that he or she can show personal factors effectively to negotiate environmental demands⁽¹²⁾. Many agrees person centered factors may refer to (i.e., generic skills, personal adaptability and disciplinary content knowledge) because basically individuals have less or no input into employers hiring criteria, such as years of experience and job specific skills (external factors)^(6 & 23).

A. Graduates Employability Attributes

Typically, high employable graduates demonstrate strong communication skills and the ability to convey information to others, an initiative to ensure customer/client satisfaction with every contact, consistently high standards and commitment to quality service, consistently high commitment to integrity, honesty and ethical conduct, self-motivated, and ability to work independently in their life⁽¹³⁾. Good graduates can be recognized by their high self-esteem, internal locus of control, optimism and clear aspirations, achievement and goal orientations, reflexivity, problem-solving capacity, respect

for the autonomy of themselves and others, healthy communication pattern, and the capacity to seek out mentoring adult relationships⁽¹⁸⁾. Graduates with high employability attributes have been identified as usually having three attributes: personality management attributes, exploration attributes and connectivity attributes⁽²⁰⁾. The graduate with high employability attributes, it is said, is one who works well, and could blend with the environment well⁽⁸⁾, while young people who lack employability attributes have been found to have a number of challenges throughout their career life⁽¹⁹⁾. With this background, it is clearly crucial to help young people develop employability attributes as well as to promote employability activities, allowing appropriate social development and psychosocial well-being.

Early theories of graduate's employability emphasized the identification of certain attributes that are associated with employability⁽¹⁾. This line of research later expanded to include external activities that may promote employability, such as sports, debates and community project^(4, 5, 15&7). Current theories view employability as a national agenda that cannot be left to graduates alone, but it seeks 360 attentions through interactions within the environment – families, universities and government agencies⁽¹⁶⁾. If environmental factors can contribute to employability attributes within individuals, then those attributes are available for modification to increase quality or enhancing assets in people's lives⁽¹⁷⁾. Of three social structural environments identified⁽³⁾ higher institutions are acknowledged as a key setting for exploration for their potential to strengthen the employability attributes of graduates. Clearly, the number of youth served by universities and the amount of time over which students are influenced by their university environment from diploma to bachelor are the major reasons for such effort. In addition, the role of the university in youth development, the capacity of the university personnel to develop competence in students and the ability of the university to serve as an organizational base for mobilizing linkages with government agencies and industries resources are the critical reasons for working through university to enhance employability attributes⁽⁹⁾. Writing to this level, it is worth to mention here that this effort is kind of building employability attributes through extra curriculum activities (ECA).

II. Extra-curriculum Activities

ECA is may thus use non-job related experiences, such as participation in extracurricular activities (ECAs) during their studies, to demonstrate knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) to recruiters, but also to add x-factor and value to their identifications. ECAs may therefore become more important in the selection of young applicants. Yet few studies have undertaken a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the relationships students have with these activities. ECA is such a technique and over decades, this technique has received greater attention in Malaysia. There is strong evidence based on previous research⁽⁴⁾, in systematic reviews^(13, 10, 8) and in policy documents⁽²⁰⁾ for a focus on non-job related experiences through extracurricular activities. National Graduate Employability Blueprint⁽²⁵⁾ is a comprehensive guide for policy administrators, Institutions of Higher learning (IHL) leaders, and programme managers to obtain a quick understanding of the graduate

employability (GE) charter to embark on a road map of necessary measures in order to enhance the graduate employability programmes and activities within their institutions (i.e leadership programme, High End Industry Graduate Internship Programme (HEIGIP), Sports and Voluntary Activities).

Quote from the Prime Minister's Budget Speech (September 28, 2012)⁽²⁴⁾

"Every year about 180,000 students graduate with diplomas and degrees from institutions of higher learning. The Government will launch the Government Employability (GE) Blueprint to assist unemployed graduates by the end of 2012. The GE Blueprint focuses on strengthening the employability of graduates".

To be best prepared for the workplace, higher education students not only need to be excellent in academic learning, however they need to experience the skills, qualities and dispositions, which can be developed through the non-academic and extracurricular activities (ECAs). The concept of 'life-wide learning'⁽²⁾ captures this idea in suggesting that learning should occurs through both formal and informal experiences in different leaning environment, with academic courses and ECAs representing different environment within the student experience⁽²⁾. Previous studies on the value of ECAs has highlighted that involvement is related to a number of valuable workplace skills and attributes such as improved critical thinking, leadership and social skills^(22,26), which are desired by industries and employers^(9,21). Data from the Ministry of Higher Education (2006)⁽¹⁴⁾ identified that those participating in service learning (community service within an educational programme) reported higher gains in several areas of learning and development. Career development programmes were also rated extremely positively; they were perceived to facilitate the development of career-related skills and new ways of thinking.

Given working environment is unknown to graduates, therefore non-job related experience is relevant to assist students to build employability attributes. Thus, ECA appears to be an ideal choice to promote graduates employability attributes as it contains all of the three elements relevant to external factor.

A. A Review of Study on ECA

TABLE I. A SUMMARY OF THE AIMS, DESIGNS AND MAJOR OUTCOMES OF THE FIVE STUDIES CONSIDERED IN THIS REVIEW

| Authors | Aims | Sample Size | Design | Outcome Measures |
|----------------------|---|-------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Thomson et.al (2013) | Detail the nature and value of extracurricular activity engagement and the significance of institutional schemes encouraging extracurricular activity engagement. | N=67 | CST (during studies - questionnaire) | -Most students (80%) recognized that their ECAs could have career benefits and offering specific experiences and skill development useful for future employment goals. i.e Team working and communication skills -Over half held a position of responsibility in one of their ECAs; compared to women, twice as many men held positions of responsibility or |

| | | | | leadership, - cope with stressful times |
|---------------------------|--|------------|--|--|
| Tchibozo & Pasteur (2004) | To study the effects of extra-curricular activity on graduates' transition from higher education to the labor market. | N= 119 | CST (6 mo after graduation – Online Questionnaire) | -Graduates agreed that extra-curricular activity has a significant influence on the transition process. After graduation, all respondents entered the labor market. At that point, almost 60 percent get employed. - 71.87 students with ECA reported they have an advantage in terms of occupational status that is managerial post. - The 'Leaders and Citizens' (experience in citizenship activities or as leaders), had the best transition outcomes (access to large firms and to managerial occupations, low risk of and short spells in unemployment). The 'Sportspersons', the most frequently observed extra-curricular behavior, associated with average transition outcomes. |
| Lau et.al (2014) | Examine the impact of participation in extra-curricular activities during college on graduate employability: an empirical study of graduates of Taiwanese business schools | N = 28,768 | CST (Online Questionnaire) | Majority agrees different types of extra-curricular activities could unequally influence the employability of graduating college students. Leadership skills benefited most from involvement in sports clubs, while creativity skills benefited most from involvement in music clubs. Communication and self-promotion skills benefited moderately from all extra-curricular activities. |
| Roulin & Bangerter (2012) | To test the reasons students got involved in ECAs, how they integrate them in their résumés, and their beliefs about how employers will interpret their activities | N-197 | CST(questionnaire) | Graduates perceived associative and volunteering activities to help acquisition of leadership skills more than individual sports and artistic activities. |
| Nikitina & Furuoka (2012) | To test the development of soft skills through extra activities in university courses | N-110 | CST (questionnaire) | Many of the students who ranked the university courses and lecturers as "mostly effective" mentioned various activities, such as forums, study projects and field research, as very helpful in the acquisition of the soft skills could be acquired only by doing "real work" |

NOTE: CST – CONVIENIENCE SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Figure 1. Example of a figure caption. (figure caption)

Discussion

The article that reported on a ECA evaluation found that relevant extra curriculum activities were well received, with a high proportion of participants agreeing that the participation in ECA were contributing to their graduates employability. The participation rate of survey for students was 100%. Approximately 90% of the participants indicated they “strongly agree” or “agree” that the extra curriculum activities were effective in imparting relevant knowledge, facilitating learning of principles and skills in strengthening employability attributes and highlighting the importance of community-government agencies collaborative approach in implementing an effective strategic extracurricular activities in universities.

The study found that the intervention programme of ECA can significantly improve the level of learning skills, local community (through voluntarily project) government agencies; curriculum development relating to graduates employability in all curriculum areas. Furthermore, first year students and graduating students gain the most benefit from live experience activities in the activities involved.

Limitations

It is generally accepted that important quantitative information in the higher institution setting may not be written up and published. However, it is important to review and assess published evidence that is being made publicly available on the major electronic databases in this vital area.

Conclusions

In summary, only a limited number of studies have been undertaken to promote building graduates employability through extra-curriculum activities. In general, extra-curriculum activities to enhance graduates employability among graduates were considered to be effective.

Implications for school business management

- (1) Future research should focus on specific extra-curriculum activities, as employability attributes may require adequate time to take place.
- (2) There is a need to investigate other attributes of employability specifically for health administrative graduates.
- (3) There is a need to investigate new attributes of employability that is resilience.

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