

AN ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF OMAN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS EFFORTS TO ENHANCE EMPLOYABILITY OF FRESH GRADUATES

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Abstract

The concept for this study arose while observing an increasing trend of unemployment rate among fresh graduates in the sultanate on one hand, and on the other, the presence of unfilled vacancies, especially in the private sector. In spite of the Omani government's efforts in recruiting Omani graduates, the industries are seeming to source their talents from other countries, and this brings us to the topic of the study: What do the HEIs in Oman do to enhance the employability skills of its graduates.

Higher educational institutions in Oman have been constantly trying to enhance the employability of their graduates. The gap between the skills acquired in the HEI and those required in the industry is seeming to be widening this study attempts to bridge the gap by identifying the perspective of HEIs on the employability skills of Omani graduates. The study will enlighten the HEI s to view their program contents in light of industry requirements.

Hence, it was decided to meet key representatives of all the major HEIs of Oman. The representatives were taken from Graduate Follow up Departments, Alumni Associations, on job Training Offices, Placement Centers/departments, Academicians of major HEIs from where the majority of Omanis graduate from. Mainly the ten branches of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences were chosen for study as it graduates students in Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies streams. The branches are located in ten different regions of the Sultanate. This makes the study bring a cross-sectional view of the issue at hand and possible solutions.

The key objective of the research project are (1) to study the perception Higher Education Institution(HEI) over the employability skills of Omani fresh graduates, (2) to analyze the strategies adopted by the HEIs to enhance their students' employability skills, (3) to analyze the expectations of graduates and employers regarding the employability of Omani fresh graduates, and (4) to study the linkage between the academic programs, course curriculum and outcomes with the Omani fresh graduate job requirements.

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The methodology adopted was to collect qualitative data using structured and semi-structured interviews with the staff of Institutions' Job placement departments/centers, Graduate Follow-up Departments, On job Training offices, Alumni association office bearers and teaching staff in higher educational institutions. The interviews focused on studying the graduates from 2019, 2020 and 2022 with different respondents on their availability at the designated locations suitable for them. Even Though there were, structured interviews the respondents were allowed to respond freely.

The interviews revealed that there is a gap between the job requirement skills in various jobs and learning outcomes and course contents offered in HEIs. Students often take up additional skill studies in external training institutions to gain employability skills.

The study found that wherever the course content and design were governed and guided by professional bodies such as ACCA, CISCO, and IEEE there the employability skills gaps were identified thin. The ACCA organization stated that they were aware of the needs of the employers and has a good idea of the learning requirements of the graduates.

HEI and their representative bodies should explore ways to ensure the perfect match between the types of academic programs being provided and what is required to address the wider macroeconomic conditions. However, an important caution should be that HEI also needs to provide learning that addressed broader social issues and needs.

HEI and employer partnership should be stimulated and strengthened with the employer having a more active role in HEI employability strategies and policies. Our research reveals that where partnerships are sustained, employers can have a significant effect on employability approaches particularly when they are participating in course design.

Employers' participation in HEI committees and council should not be superfluous but they should be permitted to facilitate meaningful inputs. Our study found that employers' impact was limited because their contributions are not fully absorbed.

INTRODUCTION

According to The Oman Statistical Year Book – (OSYB 2021)¹, the trend in the unemployment rate of fresh Graduates in the Sultanate is on the increase. Despite the many programs and drives from government, industry and institutions, Omani fresh graduates find it difficult to secure a job matching to their education. On the other hand, the industries have unoccupied job vacancies but face difficulties in finding applicants with matching skill sets. According to NCSI 2020 the fresh graduate unemployment rate in Oman in was reported as 11 percent and it continued to

remain in double digit (10.5%) since 2019 as per the *Oxford Economic Forecast for Oman*.²

This study aimed to explore the initiatives, and program of the HEIs in enhancing the employability skills of their graduates. According to Ministry of Labour official statistics published in Oman Observer the total number of job seekers is 65,438 including 24,866 men and 40572 women. In addition, the same statistic represented that the average waiting period for jobs was about 3.5 years (*Rajab, 2017*)³. Unemployment on one side and non-employability on the other side. Apparently, there is a gap. This study aimed to unravel the gap. Specifically, the study mapped the various initiatives taken in the HEIs to provide employability skills for their graduates. It also focuses on specific training offered to graduates helping them to face each stage of the recruitment process such as CV preparation, facing employment written tests, and facing Job Interviews.

The study covered fresh graduates from the disciplines of Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies, in the previous academic years (2018- 19, 19-20) ie, passed out students from various branches of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences and other higher educational

Institutes from different regions of the Sultanate. (Muscat, Dhofar, Adh Dhahirah, Al Dhakliya, Al Batina, Ash Sharqiah. Employability skills of all nature (technical or others) were taken for analysis. The employability focused on all major sectors of the economy of public and private. Which included but not limited to, Oil and Gas, Services such as Banking, Insurance, Medical, Tourism etc., Government Departments, Other Trading and Manufacturing.

The data relating employability skill were drawn from secondary and primary sources. The secondary sources included, past HR recruitment and selection records, rejection reports from recruiters. In addition, primary data relating to the study was collected from HEIs and bodies associated with graduate employability:

The findings of this project would be highly significant to multiple stakeholders in Oman:

1. For Graduate Job Seeker:

This project would spell out the missing skill sets, knowledge base among the graduates. Once the graduates acquire these missing skills, they would find it easier to secure jobs.

2. For Educational Institutions:

This project would provide a clear agenda for the educational institutions on the kind of

skills/knowledge that are expected in the job market. It will help them to prepare their graduates with right type of skill sets.

3. For Ministry of Manpower & Higher Education:

This project would provide report of the status quo of the job market and unemployment factors in the region. This will help them to make policies and guidelines related to the issue of unemployment.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

There is a significant gap between what industry require and what graduates possess in terms of employability skills in Oman. While there is a high rate of unemployed graduates, there is also significant number of vacant jobs due to non-availability of matching skill sets among the fresh graduates.

The initiatives taken by the HEIs for covering the gap between the fresh graduate's skills and employer's requirement is the central issue focused in the study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the perception of HEIs over the employability skills of Omani fresh graduates.
2. To find the strategies adopted by the HEIs to enhance their students' employability skills.
3. To analyze the graduates; and employers' expectation over the employability skills of Omani fresh graduates.
4. To study the linkage between the academic programs, course curriculum and outcomes with the Omani fresh graduate job requirements.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted was to collect qualitative data using structured and semi structured interviews with staff from higher educational institutions, the interviews were conducted in 2020,2021 and 2022 with different respondents on their availability at the designated locations suitable for them. Even Though there were, structured interviews the respondents were allowed to respond freely. Each interview lasted for 1 hour or one hour thirty minutes depending on the the significance of data provided by the respondents, If the responses were given common pattern which is already with the researchers such interviews were for short period of time, Else most interviews were conducted for 1 hour 30 mins. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. In order to enable team participation some interviews were conducted using Microsoft teams and

participants were from different locations. In the semi structured interviews, questionnaires were used to guide the responses towards the researchers' requirements. The respondents were allowed to speak freely. The interview schedule for HEIs consisted of questions relating to factors, which influence Omani fresh graduate employability skills or lack of it, which lead to recruitment rejection and suggestions for reducing rejections.

PHASES OF THE STUDY

Phase 1:

Review of literature and Pilot study was taken as the starting point and based on the experiences and observations survey questionnaire and interview schedule were prepared, These instruments were reviewed and finalized by expert panel consisting of HR specialists, Academic experts and representatives of the local administration.

Phase 2:

In this stage HEIs were approached for the survey, experts were met and scoping interviews were carried out, had discussions with HEIs Representatives. At least one HEI was included in the study from each of the ten regions of the Sultanate. The research methods were intended to draw out the the various initiatives taken by the HEIs to enhance the employability skills among the Omani fresh graduates for the previous three years. The study focused on the following key areas:

- Job requirements of fresh graduates
- Methods of assessment of fresh graduate employability skills
- Past three years observations on the skill gaps present among the Omani fresh graduate.

Omani fresh graduates from ten branches of University of Technology and Applied sciences were covered for the study. The representatives of graduate follow up department, OJT department; Alumni associations were included in the study.

EXPECTATION OF GRADUATES AND EMPLOYERS OVER THE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

The employer interviews revealed that there is a gap between the job requirement skills in various jobs and learning outcomes and course contents offered in HEIs. Students often take up additional skill studies in external training institutions to gain employability skills.

Some employers stated that graduates meeting the laid-out learning outcomes from professional bodies such as ACCA, ISACA, CISCO ACADEMY, IEEE such graduates were more

employment ready. However, for others they viewed that the skills acquired from higher education degrees were less significant to the set of other employable skills such as work-related learning, group projects and team assignment.

Large corporates gave more importance to the students' behaviour in the interview to identify the motivation of the graduates during the recruitment process. The generic skills were assessed using presentations, group discussion and interviews. Some of the employers offer fresh employee training post recruitment.

Moreover, the employers stated the need for specific attitude and approaches including job motivation, mental strength and loyalty. Overall, these correspond with the findings of literature review.

Few employers emphasized the importance of recruiting Omani fresh graduates who could demonstrate the required technical and non-technical skills using practical employment tests.

Employers emphasized that the academic and technical skills of Omani fresh graduates were usually high, but there were converse views concerning the broad attitudes required and possessed by fresh graduate employees.

Employers claimed that training given to Omani fresh graduates in the higher educational institutions in CV preparation, mock interview drills and presentations were very useful but many graduates lacked these skills and motivation to make strong impression during the initial stages of recruitment. The commonly observed lacuna from the graduates is that they do not pay adequate attention in drafting their CV for specific employer. Some other employers stated that the student lacked interview skills and they generally do not carry out employer background search before appearing for job interviews.

The employers observed that the requirement of the industry should be linked from beginning to end of the academic program. There was a significant demand for such skills as initiative, flexibility, leadership, communication skills from the employers. The respondents of the study stated that the HEIs were performing well in their theoretical teaching content but lacking in applied knowledge and employability skills. Some employers expressed that graduates could be taught about job interviews.

The employers emphasized that the course contents in HEIs should be designed and developed in consultation with industry representatives. The respondents opined that the skill development should begin from early phases of educations such as from schools.

There were not adequate systematic approaches from HEIs to engage with employers. Some

employers recommend that HEI should conduct collaborative research along with the industry. In the employer interviews, the HR managers were of the opinion that academic grades were not aligned with the employability skills among the fresh graduates.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Few HEIs stated that a degree from a good Institution itself is a form of confirmation of high degree of employability. Graduates with some work experiences are seen to be comparatively more employable. In addition, students who participate in extra-curricular activities such as Entrepreneurial Workshops, Professional skill development programs, are also observed to be more employable. Training programs to enhance the linkage of university learnings to workplace are conducted by HEIs to enhance the employability of their graduates.

From the Interactions with HEIs, it is found that the following list of graduate attributes, work readiness characteristics and skills as highly significant to fresh graduate's employability but missing from the graduates from the recent years (period covered by the study):

In general, the HEIs were observed to be having similar perception on the skill sets of fresh graduate employability. The Universities of Technologies and Applied Sciences have identified the following skills as having higher significance to employability: Communication skills, Life-long learning, Teamwork, Scholastic rigour and competence, innovation, autonomy, accountability and entrepreneurship.

- Time management
- Presentation skill
- Teamwork ability
- Leadership skills (Many HEIs offer Leadership skill as a separate workshop due to high demand from employers)
- Ability of establishing professional relationship with people
- Effective technical communication skills (both written and oral)
- Initiative capability of working on their own
- Independent work capacity
- Ownership of responsibilities
- Problem solving and creativity

- Work readiness (possessing appropriate work behaviour – HEIs stated that their employers were concerned about these skills. They also stated that there is no adequate chance for large number of students to gain work readiness directly from work places)
- Entrepreneurial skills (The skills related to business planning, study of its feasibility, and implementation)
- Commercial awareness (The knowledge related commercial application their skills and the relative position of companies that use this skills)
- Self-development and learning
- Self-evaluation and reflection
- Motivation and enthusiasm
- Self-confidence (The skill to identify employment that matches the graduates' skills and aspirations)

HEIs perspective of Employability Skills

There were many drivers, which prompted these initiatives the most important one being the governmental drive to increase the overall employment of Omani graduates.

It was evident that certain HEIs focused more on enhancing their graduates' employability than others. Such institutes who focused more on employability skill enhancement of their graduates were organizing special trainings, workshops, mock-interview sessions, preparatory classes for employment tests, practice campus placement programs etc.

Industry Linkage with HEIs

The HEIs that had comprehensive industry backed curricula and academic objectives and goals had established a strong linkage with industry. For example, an OJT director of an Institution stated that, the HEI do not prepare the students for employment directly, however the various curricular and extracurricular inputs given to students make them employable.

Certain HEIs offer training to their academic staff on student employability. Such trained faculty were able to blend their teaching content with inputs for employability also.

Employers also fund applied academic students research, along with the research council of Oman, which lead to employability of their graduates.

Each institution has devised their own mechanism to link with industry for gaining jobs for their graduates. Some HEIs has high technology and infrastructure for this purpose along with their

strategic location in close proximity to their institution (Al Batnah, Muscat Governate, Dhofar, etc) While other institutes such as the ones located in a non-industrialized region (Al Sharqia, Al Dhahira) expressed their challenges to link with industries that were located far away from their Institutions.

The Graduates Follow up cells of certain HEIs hold annual campus-placement programs to enhance employability of their graduates. The study found that HEIs have established specialised departments for enhancing the employability of their graduates, these departments study the industry requirement for employability and interpret them to the internal stakeholders, and this process leads to systematic inclusions of employability skills in the curriculum.

HEIs had unified plans and strategies to develop employability skills among their graduates however; they differed in their approach and implementation. Each HEI was observed to have their own unique organizations of connections and programs with employers in order to enhance the employability of their graduates. For Example, some HEI had centralised structures such as specialized departments and staff committees whereas others left this responsibility to individual staff and Heads.

The study revealed that some HEIs focus on creating linkage with big industries while other HEIs sought linkage with local SMEs to develop strategies on graduate employability. Employment facilitation in HEIs covered by on-job-training, which is seen to be the key force behind the liaison of the institution with the employers. These liaisons ensure regular inputs from the employers' and graduates' recruiters specifically in providing job related information and provide their guidance through job placement events and programs.

Activities for Graduate Employment

The researchers enquired the HEIs about the types of initiatives, which are used in their Institutions to increase graduates' employability. Specifically, the researchers asked the HEI authorities about their scope for employment, on the job training, and practical learning which were identified as the key approaches valued by recruiters.

The role of OJT, Graduation projects and other assignments:

The graduation projects are offered at all levels of graduation. Students are given scope to work small teams to address a business issue faced by the host organization.

In addition to that, On Job Trainings are offered as individual training placement in organizational setting to familiarize and acquire job skills.

The duration of training and projects varied among the institutions-based duration of their semesters. For examples private Universities assign their students to take up graduation projects for consecutive two semesters (6 credit hours) and OJT for 8 weeks. Certain other HEIs offer 15 weeks of graduation projects (5 credit hours) and internship for 6-8 weeks. However, at the Colleges of Technology and the duration of graduation projects are one trimester (3 credit hours) and OJT were of 8 weeks duration.

It is found that graduation projects and, on the job, training are found to be applied in the HEIs to provide students job-oriented skills and learning. On the job training are found to be particularly effective by the graduates. All the HEIs in Oman use these OJT and Graduation Projects extensively to employ their graduates.

These initiatives were provided to students with the aim of offering feel the real working environment and are acquainted with organizational culture, business operation and administrative functions. In addition, to help them grasp the basic concepts and gain experience related to their specialization in order to enhance their employability.

All HEI departments that is responsible for graduate employment opined that OJT, Assignments and graduation projects lead to enhanced employability of fresh graduates. The staff of graduate employment departments of HEIs said that the students' self-confidence and job skills were enhanced and they were better able to make their career decisions.

According to one of the OJT coordinators in a HEI, "OJT are very useful in getting the first job for graduates. Usually, graduates are offered choice of location for such training"

The HEIs that had employment partnership with industry proved beneficial for employment of fresh graduates. Among the specializations Engineering and Information Technology studies had proved more beneficial, followed by Business Studies.

There are instances where the training providers, having witnessed the employability of students, offered permanent job placements in the field of their training, to the trainee students after completion of their degree program.

In most HEIs these internships and projects are integral part of their curriculum. Students face difficulties in getting the exact match between their area of specialization and their OJT field of work. This is an important factor leading to gaps in graduate employability.

Certain corporations in Oman offer internship for Omani graduates through their websites and advertisements. This encourages students to register themselves to such internship programs.

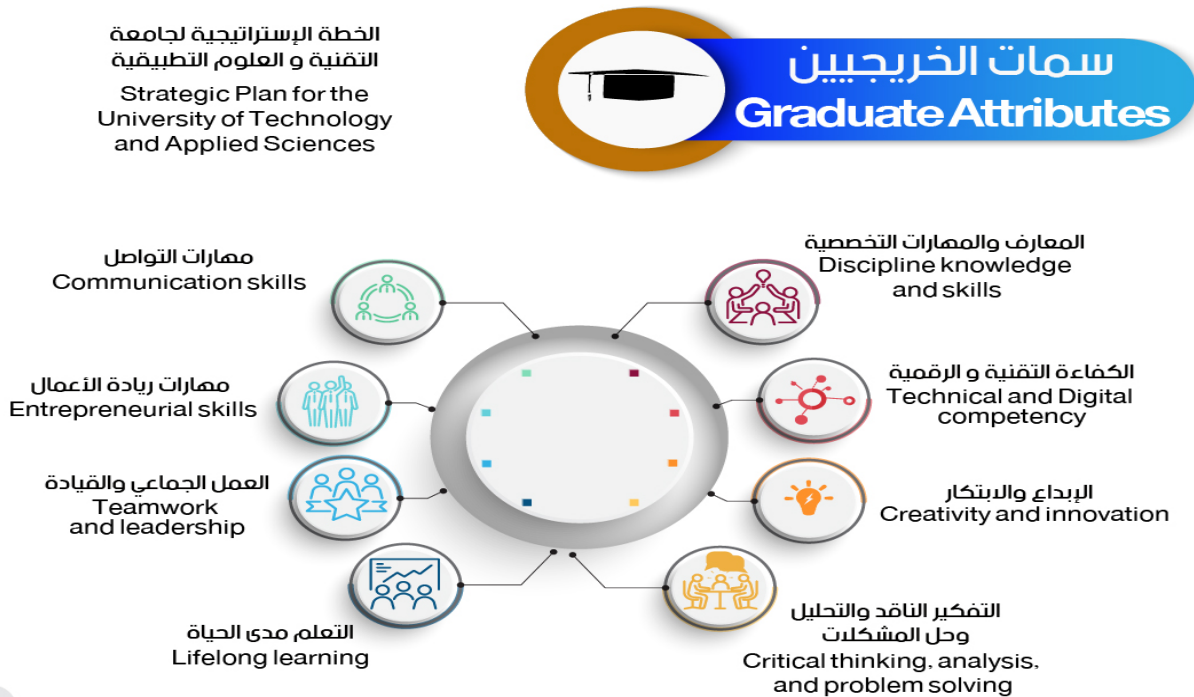
As noted earlier, the training providers for the students from HEIs, give valuable feedback on the skill gaps that exist with student trainees. This is a significant contribution to the employability of fresh graduates.

Graduate Employment Initiatives and Drives

In the HEIs covered by this study, there were less independent graduate employability programs or events. However, the academic experts in the HEIs incorporated the graduate employability skills and framed them as Graduate Attributes.

These attributes have to be attained through various academic programs and events.

This is a way they ingrain the job skills into the curriculum. For example, the graduate attributes established by University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Oman are as follows:



Source: University of Technology and Applied Sciences Nizwa- website

The above-mentioned graduate attributes are constructed within all the course objectives and goals which in turn reflected in course outcomes. In accordance to the course outcomes, the academicians build their course and teaching materials, Hence the graduate attributes are ingrained into the entire academic programs offered by the HEIs.

In addition to the above, HEIs also take up independent graduate employment initiatives listed below:

- The employability unit of HEIs organize career fairs where the employers are invited to the campuses to recruit fresh graduates.
- As stated earlier, in addition to the above initiatives, the inbuilt employability skill development system into the curriculum such as: On job Training programs, Field assignments and graduation projects support the drive of HEIs towards their graduate employment.
- The unit also continuously share relevant job advertisements for fresh graduates through various official social media platforms.
- Every year the graduation department prepares a Graduate Career Brochure consisting profiles of all graduating students of the academic year and sends them to prospective employers. The employers respond by shortlisting graduates for further recruitment process.

This makes the students to feel gratitude to the institutions, which contributed to the personal and professional development. The management of HEIs believe that employers are expecting general employability skills and experience from their fresh graduates. The following are the key employability skill areas:

A rigorous placement-training program at the terminal level of graduation has been designed centrally and executed in all the thirteen campuses of UTAS. This program enhances the students' employability skills. It is predicated on the fact that each fresh graduate should get employment training before exiting the educational institution.

- Academic Specialization Skills (Research Skills, Academic writing, Time management, exam preparation, academic skills development)
- Enrichment Activities (Student societies, involving in volunteering, interest groups, becoming student leaders)
- Employability skills (Undertaking job placements, meeting employers, part-time work, entrepreneurship training)
- Career planning (Building curriculum vitae, practice interviews, career planning and developing the skills to find a job at the end of the academic program)

The above-mentioned key skill areas are given high focus for student employability. The top-management of the HEIs believe that engaging with all the four key areas will result in student getting chance to succeed at university develop both personally and professionally and enhance

their possibility to future employers.

The HEIs are observed to be supporting their graduates to find their first job after completion of their academic program.

On Job / Internships and Placement Training

Each part of the OJT/ Internship program is made up of series of sessions guided and supervised by academic assessors and industry supervisors, workshops delivered by professional trainers. In addition, the students also conduct self- learning activities. Each assessor update the process in the OJT internship system in the HEI website. In addition, feedback of the students, college assessor and industry supervisor are collected at the end of the program. This contributes students' ongoing individual and occupational improvement.

At the end of OJT/Internship program, students are required to submit a On the Job Training Assessment record and Student log book. The logbook consists of:

- Students log of daily activities for the period of training
- Student evaluation form
- Organization evaluation form
- College assessor evaluation form
- Attendance record

The industry supervisor will carry out student assessment based on the following key areas:

- Communication skills
- English Language written and spoken
- Computer skill
- Initiative
- Teamwork
- Responsibility
- Self-dependence
- Self-confidence
- Acceptance to suggestions and criticism
- Technical Skill overall performance

- Attitude and discipline
- Job task completion
- Relationship and collaboration
- Quality presentation and report
- Overcoming limitation

Successful completion of OJT/ Internship program is a mandatory requirement for the award of degree.

The researches from HEIs revealed that besides the regular credit based academic attainments the students should be provided with the official recognition of extra-curricular activities and achievements. Further, it was recommended that students could acquire important employability skills such as Teamwork, leadership, Communication and commercial awareness from their extra-curricular activities such as: Part- Time jobs, Involving in volunteering works. Generally, the HEI officials commented that the present economic scenario and pandemic environment has enhanced awareness of the employability skills.

Association between Employer and HEI is very important. The focus on employability is now more significant than in the past. Employability is one of the key result areas for any HEI.

It is recommended that the HEIs should engage in continuous employer relationships to fulfil the requirements of fresh graduates.

HEI officials stressed that employers and HEIs had two different drivers that is teaching and research versus profit motives. This is the reason for the reluctance of HEIs to focus on developing employability of graduates, rather HEIs aim to develop student's skills to think and be independent.

For example, HEIs see employability as an important aspect of universities' mission and objectives. However, it is found that many of the criteria for employability identified by the HEIs are compatible with academic and wider abilities, capacities and advancement.

This study revealed that there are variations in the extent of recruiter's relationship and the efforts taken by the HEIs to enhance employability. In addition, the study also advocates that continuing to work with employer to offer superior service for employment opportunities for fresh graduates. The following are some of the comments collected from the interviews with HEIs:

Nevertheless, a few HEIs highlighted that there were strains between universities and employers

because of conflicting agendas and priorities in training the graduates.

CONCLUSIONS AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The literature on fresh graduate employability and our research both reveal that while there are many activities undertaken in most HEIs to address fresh graduate employability, the extent to which this is happening and the level to which it is embedded in their core curricula is uncertain. In spite of the government's policies to encourage HEIs and industry to join, together to develop approaches and measures that contributes to Omani fresh graduates' employability skills.

Possibly, above all the literature and our own findings have compellingly pointed out the importance of placements, On the job training, graduation projects and field- assignments as effective ways of providing HEI fresh graduates with related employment skills, knowledge and awareness of employer culture.

The skills, knowledge, qualities and characteristics that are included in the term employability are not the same across the industry and HEIs. The industry demands the fresh graduates to possess the technical and specialisation related competencies from their graduation. They also expect the graduates to acquire broader skills and attributes that include communication skills, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, problem- solving, managerial abilities, discipline. The varied understanding of term employability skills is rather less important than accepted focus on approaches, which promote transferrable skills and attributes that will help graduates to find relevant employment, development in their career and thus facilitates the success of their organizations and contribute to social and economic development.

In comparison, little is known about the impact of HEIs programs and measures to promote graduate employability skills and attributes. There is scarcity of systematic evaluation of such measures. This is particularly true in understanding the longer-term benefits to graduates.

REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Developing graduate employability skills and competencies should be included in HEIs strategic and institution level planning. Universities need to promote employability skills through their graduate attributes, teaching and learning methodologies, course outcomes, course objectives and goals and practical guidance.
- Staff should be motivated to acknowledge that these objectives are in match with promoting employability and broader practical skills. Pertinent incentive for academic staff should be used as a motivator for change in promoting employability measures in faculty and departmental level.

- There is evidence from our research that while HEI policy have endorsed the need to address employability this has not necessarily apparent in the practices that is found in the whole institution. This is due to faculty and departmental heads that are resistant to employability measures.
- It is recommended that HEIs and the related ministries explore how career service can be enhanced and resources to promote employability activities more effectively at faculty and department level. Our research indicates that strategy led rather than ad-hoc, project lead, employability measures are likely to have a greater and sustained impact on graduate employability. Employability measures need to be systematic embedded into practices of the institutions.

The role of Job Placements

- These experimental opportunities require careful planning built in if they are to be an effective way of providing HEIs students with relevant employment skills, knowledge and awareness of industrial working conditions. They will also require effective, constant and justifiable MoUs between HEIs and industries.
- Other systematic initiatives to develop and endorse student experiential and work related learning are recommended. For example, On the Job training program appear to be highly valued by both graduates and employers. These programs are observed as significant because they enable student's access to work related learning activities in HEIs and work based opportunities such as placements, but also allow these experiences and relevant reports and certificates to be documented as a source of evidence to present to employers.
- The training industries may provide evidences for student learning and participation and output because of the training program that students can use to demonstrate their employability skills to employers.
- The components of education that involves fieldwork, project works and assignments should be strengthened. One of the most important measures HEIs can adopt to promote employability is the scope for joint-placement, On the Job training, and graduation project may undergo extension of duration than they are currently practiced. Some of the Engineering courses already make use of these approaches but Business and other courses could benefit from greater use of such measures.

Matching the Industry requirement with Course Curriculum in HEIs

- HEI and their representative bodies should explore ways to ensure perfect match between the types of academic programs being provided and what is required to address the wider macroeconomic conditions. However, an important caution should be that HEI also need to provide learning that addressed broader social issues and needs.
- HEI and employer partnership should be stimulated and strengthened with employer having more active role in HEI employability strategies and policies. Our research reveals that where partnerships are sustained, employers can have significant effect on employability approaches particularly when they are participating in course design.
- Employers' participation in HEI committees and council should not be superfluous but they should be permitted to facilitate meaningful inputs. Our study found that employer's impact was limited because their contributions are not fully absorbed.
- The top management of HEIs may take into account students' generic skills and abilities required in the work place and embed them in the curriculum and course design. The design of degree courses should reflect the needs of the business, which should be developed together with employer organization. At the same time academic quality, contents focus should not be compromised.

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