

Employability of College Graduates: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to review academic research on the employability of university graduates. The paper outlines the main research topics on the employability of university graduates and outlines the gaps in previous research. This paper reviews and analyzes the themes of empirical research published in the past five years, and summarizes a total of 7 themes. These 7 themes are divided as follows. Topic 1: Development and influencing factors of graduates' employability. Topic 2: The relationship between higher education and graduates' employability. Topic 3: The impact of university-industry cooperation on graduates' employability. Topic 4: The impact of social capital and professional networks on employability. Topic 5: The Importance of Improving Soft Skills and Core Employability Soft Skills. Topic 6: The impact of social mobility factors on employability. Topic 7: Globalization, social and workplace diversity require graduates' employability.

Keywords: employability, college graduates, literature review

1. Introduction

With the popularization of higher education, the number of college graduates continues to increase. However, compared with the number of graduates, the growth of job positions is relatively limited, resulting in increasingly fierce competition for employment among college students. Especially in some popular industries and popular cities, employment pressure is more prominent. College students generally face the problem of employment information asymmetry during the job search process. Because the recruitment information for some positions is not disclosed in a timely manner or the recruitment conditions are not transparent

enough, college students lack a comprehensive understanding when choosing a job. This affects the efficiency and accuracy of college students' job search. Some college students consider more personal interests when choosing a major, while ignoring the employment needs of the industry. This leads to college students finding that their majors are not favored by the market during the employment process, making it more difficult to find a job. Whether college students actively participate in internships, social practice and other activities during school will directly affect their employment competitiveness. College students who lack practical experience are often at a disadvantage in the job search process. Some college students lack good communication

skills, teamwork skills, innovation skills, etc. These will affect their competitiveness in the job market.

In recent years, researchers have also conducted in-depth studies on the development and influencing factors of college graduates' employability. They found that rising graduate employability was undermined by factors such as skills mismatch, lack of soft skills, social capital and professional networks and core employability soft skills. At the same time, the requirements of globalization, social and workplace diversity on graduates' employability, and the importance of university-industry cooperation on graduates' employability are gradually highlighted. The findings from these studies provide us with a more comprehensive understanding that will help develop more effective strategies to improve the employability of university graduates.

2. Methods

This comprehensive review synthesizes and reviews existing academic literature on the employability of college graduates. The author mainly relies on Google Scholar to search for suitable published papers. Google Academic uses customized year standards to search for relevant research published between 2019 and 2023. When searching for keywords, a combination of two phrases was used, namely "college graduates" and "employability".

The author scanned the title and discarded non professional publications, opinion articles, and unquoted journal articles. Literature search, download, reading, and analysis of papers were conducted from November 2023 to December 2023. According to the following criteria, papers were selected for final review:

- published from 2019 to 2023;
- published in the English language;
- Focusing on education at the university level; and
- Pay attention to the employability of college graduates.

The author conducted a thematic analysis of the selected papers in this review study. I have read these files several times. These topics were determined using induction without pre-selected codes or categories.

3. Results and Discussion

Through analysis of the selected research, seven

main themes were identified. The detailed discussion of these topics is as follows.

Topic 1: Development and influencing factors of graduates' employability

The development and influencing factors of graduate employability have been the subject of extensive research. Abelha's (2020) research found that there is a mismatch between the employability of university graduates and employer needs, indicating that higher education institutions need to adopt strategies to improve the development of graduates' employability. Furthermore, Mgaiwa (2021) noted that barriers to employment ranking include skills mismatch and lack of soft skills and proposed best practices to improve graduates' employability. The study by Sato (2021) understood the employability of graduates and identified the contribution of higher education institutions to human resource production. Herbert (2020) explored graduates' perceptions of the value of a range of learning activities and paid work to enhance employability. Nwajiuba's (2020) findings indicate that there is little collaboration between higher education institutions and industry, lacking the necessary pedagogy, funding and infrastructure to carry out the teaching of employability skills. There is also research by Oklie (2020) which found that many higher education institutions lack teaching that promotes high-level general skills in their courses. Together, these findings shed light on the development and influencing factors of graduate employability.

Topic 2: The relationship between higher education and graduates' employability

Abelha's (2020) research found a mismatch between university graduates' employability and employer needs, which resulted in barriers to employment rankings. Herbert (2020) explored graduates' perceptions of the value of a range of learning activities and paid work to enhance employability. Nwajiuba's (2020) findings indicate that there is little collaboration between higher education institutions and industry, lacking the necessary pedagogy, funding and infrastructure to carry out the teaching of employability skills. Additionally, research by Jackson (2021) collected survey data on the perceived value of events, revealing that events are more helpful in terms of gaining experience and skills than in expanding

networks and improving career outcomes. Research by Nwajiuba (2020) found that there is little collaboration between higher education institutions and industry, lacking the necessary pedagogy, funding and infrastructure to carry out the teaching of employability skills. Research by Oklie (2020) found that many higher education institutions do not promote the teaching of high-level generic skills in their courses. Together, these findings highlight the relationship between higher education and graduate employability.

Topic 3: The impact of university-industry cooperation on graduates' employability

Mgaiwa (2021) argued that the growing literature on graduate employability has identified barriers to employment ranking, ranging from skills mismatch to lack of soft skills. They proposed four best practices for developing the employability of university graduates, including developing effective university-industry partnerships, aligning university education with national development plans, regular university curriculum reviews and strengthening quality assurance systems. Additionally, research by Anderson (2021) suggests that the value of non-tertiary education experiences to employability lies in how graduates dramatize their abilities, rather than simply acquiring job-related skills or enabling work-ready behaviors. Together, these findings highlight the importance of university-industry collaboration for graduate employability.

Topic 4: The impact of social capital and professional networks on employability

Social capital and professional networks have an important impact on graduates' employability. Research by Jackson (2021) found that social capital and professional networks can help graduates obtain employment opportunities and career development. Furthermore, Ferns (2019) highlights the importance of developing professional networks through means such as social media and volunteering to improve employability. English (2021) further revealed the importance of developing professional networks through cultivating social capital while at university, with alumni identifying various forms of work-integrated learning (WIL), connections through social media, the role of university staff and volunteering is a concrete way to develop professional networks and improve employability. Together, these findings

provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social capital and professional networks on graduate employability. Jackson's (2021) findings suggest that making connections and creating employment opportunities are more useful in terms of gaining experience and skills than in expanding networks and improving career outcomes. In addition, Ferns' (2019) research also revealed the importance of developing professional networks by cultivating social capital during college. These findings highlight the importance of social capital and professional networks for employability.

Topic 5: The Importance of Improving Soft Skills and Core Employability Soft Skills

Research by Mgaiwa (2021) and Borah (2021) both emphasize the importance of soft skills in improving graduates' employability. Additionally, research shows that companies consider soft skills to be more important than students/graduates (Succi, 2020). These studies demonstrate the importance of soft skills and core employability soft skills.

Topic 6: The impact of social mobility factors on employability

Research by Byrne, C. (2022) found that graduates' responses to cues such as study abroad, work experience, age, degree type, disability and ethnicity have a strong impact. At the same time, the research results of Hossain (2020) also show that social mobility factors play an important role in employability. As such, these works further highlight the impact of social mobility factors on employability.

Topic 7: Globalization, social and workplace diversity require graduates' employability

Research by Mtawa (2021) states that globalization, society and diversity in the workplace require graduates to possess social and humanistic values. On the other hand, research by Aliu (2021) found that cooperation between universities and the construction industry has a positive impact on cultivating the employability of built environment graduates. Together, these findings highlight the impact of different backgrounds and diversity on graduate employability.

4. Conclusion

The development of university graduates' employability is affected by skills mismatch, lack of soft skills, social capital and professional networks, soft skills and core employability soft

skills, and social mobility factors, while globalization, social and workplace diversity also require graduation Students possess social and humanistic values. Therefore, improving graduate employability requires universities to collaborate with industry, develop social capital and professional networks, and focus on the development of soft skills and core employability soft skills.

5. Directions for Further Research

In the future, we can further explore the impact of technological development on the employability of university graduates, the impact of interdisciplinary education on the employability of graduates, the impact of mental health conditions on the employability of graduates, the impact of social media on the employability and career development of graduates, and examining the impact of cross-cultural contexts on graduate employability. These fields can provide new perspectives and in-depth discussions for the study of college graduates' employability.

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