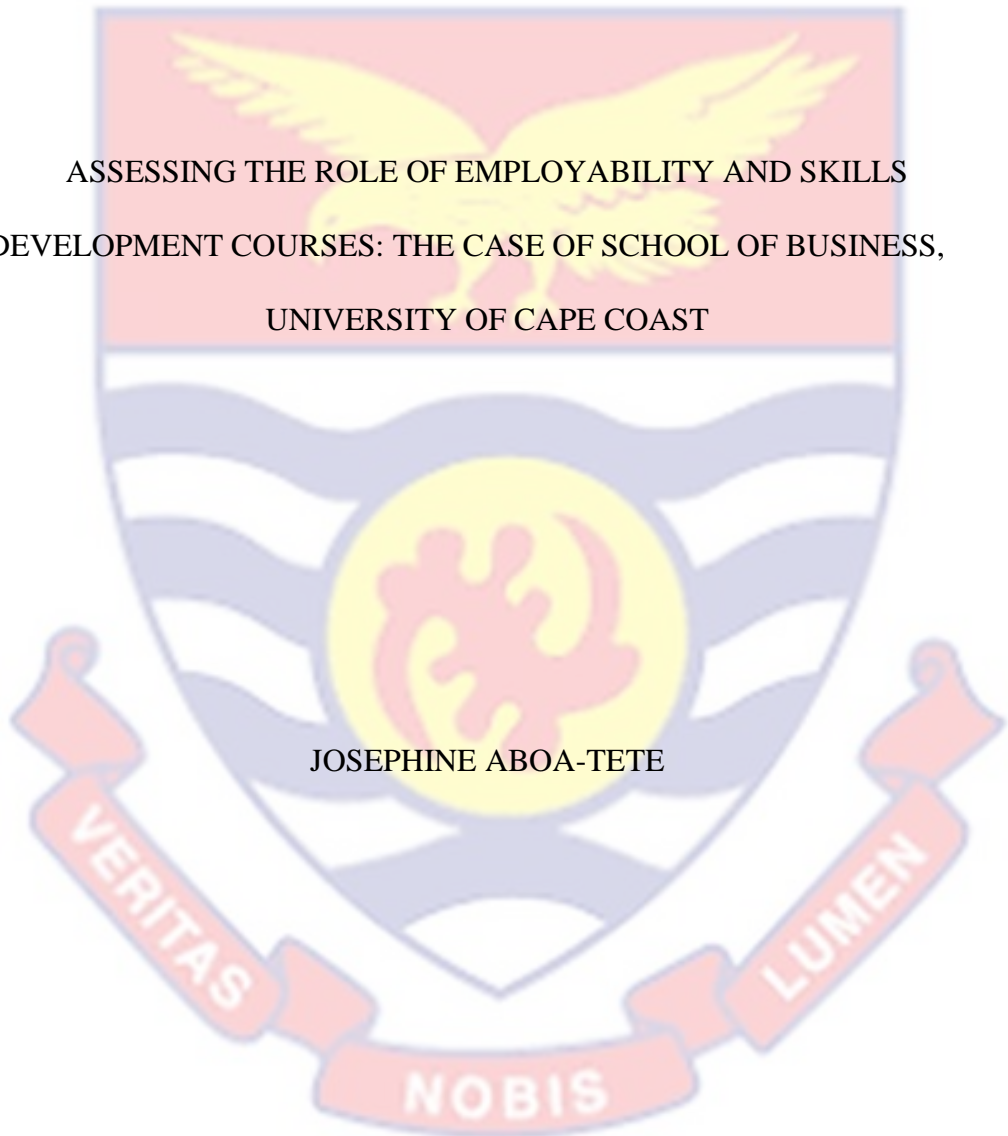UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS

DEVELOPMENT COURSES: THE CASE OF SCHOOL OF BUSINESS,

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

JOSEPHINE ABOA-TETE

2022

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST AS A

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND SKILLS UTILIZATION INSTITUTION:

THE CASE OF SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

BY

JOSEPHINE ABOA-TETE

Thesis submitted to the Department of Human Resource Management, School Of Business, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award degree in Master of Business Administration in Human Resource Management.

AUGUST, 2022

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and

that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or

elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:.. Date:.........................

Name: Josephine Aboa-Tete

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were

supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid

down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature:.................................. Date:........................

Name: Prof Nana Yaw Oppong

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted with the broad objective of assessing the the role of employability and skills development courses: the case of School of Business, University of Cape Coast. A purposive sampling technique was employed in sampling outpatient and health professionals for this study in which 7 lecturers and 3 past students of the related sample populations were selected. Qualitative data was collected through the use of interviews which were transcribed over multiple paly and analysed semantically by close reading of the text

The results revealed that skills development is a central part of the courses taught by the lecturers. It was concluded that, measurement of skills among students depends largely on the objectives of the course as well class presentations and assignments. In addition, although, some positive impacts are being made, there is the need improve more on the impacts being made. Lastly, lack of mechanisms in place to check up on the students makes it difficult to know the impact.

It was recommended that, other colleges and schools in the University of Cape Coast should make effort to ensure that programs and courses offered to students prepare them adequately for the job market and the University of Cape Coast School of Business should put in place mechanisms to trace the effectiveness and the efficiency of their students in their respective places of work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first of all, give thanks to the Almighty God without whom I would not have been able to complete this work, and without whom I would not have it through my first degree.

I wish to express my sincere and profound gratitude to my able supervisor, Prof Nana Yaw Oppong for his contributions, motivation and guidance without which the work would not have been possible. Your patience, comments and corrections have made this work possible.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Management, staff and students of School of Business, University of Cape Coast for providing me with all the necessary attention needed in the process. I thank you all for your support and Cooperation.

My profound gratitude also goes to all my family members, friends and loved ones for their contributions in diverse ways to the success of this work. To the late Sheila Yaa Adomakoah Afful, you are forever remembered. Finally, many thanks go to all participants who took part in the study and enabled this work to be possible.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, Mr. and Mrs. Aboa-Tete, for their support and words of encouragement. I also dedicate this work to the memory of the late Sheila Yaa Adomako Afful, my friends and sister. You have always supported me throughout the process. I will always a appreciate all they have done.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OCED	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
EPIs	Employability Performance Indicators
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
TLA	Teaching, learning, and assessment
HE	Higher Education
ILT	Institute for Learning and Teaching
IT	Information Technology
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
ASPIRE	Advancing Skills for Professionals in the Rural Economy
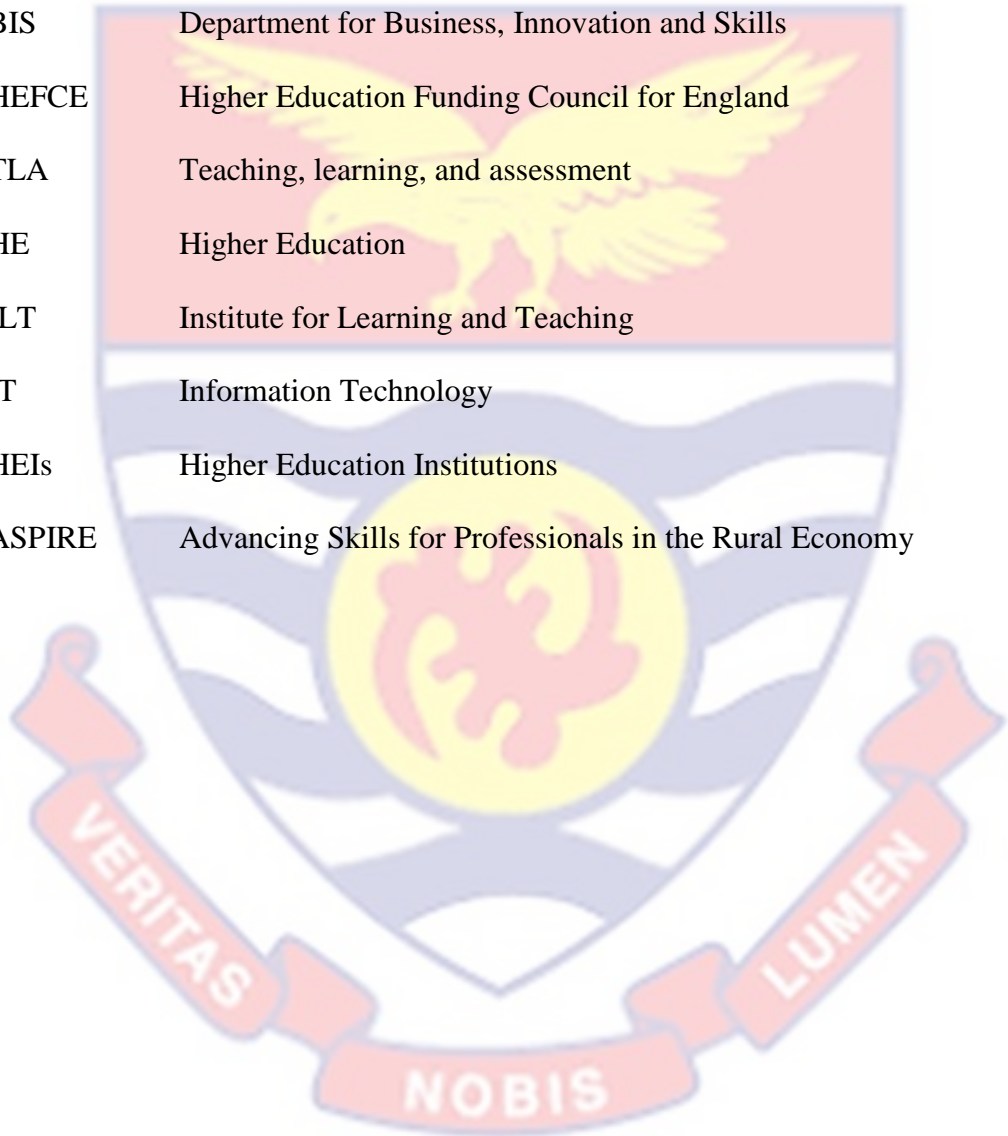
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This research assesses the role of employability and skills development courses: the case of school of business, university of cape coast.

The introductory chapter discusses the general context for the study, description of the problem, purpose of study, research questions, and significance of study, delimitations and limits, interpretation of terms of the research and organisation.

Background to the Study

Universities and institutions of higher learning are no longer expected to simply prepare graduates for a world of work, but to continuously support the learning and professional development of working people (Harvey, 2001). It is therefore important for these institutions to develop more flexible and creative models of delivery in order to support the development of autonomous, lifelong learners who are skilled in reflecting on their learning (both formal and informal) and planning for their personal, educational and professional development (Gray & Knight, 2013). It is posited that in a highly competitive global economy, there is little chance that unprepared graduates will be successful in obtaining employment and then in advancing their careers (Heimler, 2010). Training and professional development not only can aid in addressing skills gaps in entrant workers, but also help existing workers prepare for emerging skills needed in the workplace and assist those taking on increased responsibilities or embarking on new career paths with transitioning skills sets (Human Resource Management, 2008).

Skills development is a multifaceted notion and it involves "determining, attaining, and maintaining the skills needed to work, marketing oneself in order to obtain work, and working competently in order to retain work" (Romaniuk & Snart, 2000). Employability has also been seen as the extent to which people posses" skills and other attributes to find and stay in work of the kind they want (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007).

The role of academic education in enhancing the employability of graduates transiting into the job market and for national development cannot be underestimated. There is a growing demand for skills labour globally, especially in developing economies, due to globalisation, technological advancement and changing work organisation (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Nations, 2018).

All around the world, institutions are under growing pressure to demonstrate the value of higher education. With the cost of education and living continuously increasing, diverse stakeholders, including students, employers, funders and policy makers, are demanding a better understanding of what is gained by spending money and more years on education. Universities need to confront this contemporary approach, especially in a world where students can learn complex, practical and lucrative skills at a comprehensive, work-ready level through ad hoc and often self-directed learning opportunities online, at home or in the field and in a world where employers can find these skilled persons outside of the university. As the G20 Employment Working Group reports (OECD et al., 2016), "the flexibility and incentives of education and training systems and stakeholders need to be enhanced to respond more promptly to emerging skill needs". Considering

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employability thus enables universities to both think about and articulate ways in which the university nurtures distinct skills, experiences and attributes that are valued in the job market and difficult to attain elsewhere. In this way, considering employability helps universities devise ways to integrate especially useful and transferable skills and attributes throughout the educational pathways offered to students. Similarly, considering employability helps universities demonstrate that they care about their students‟ long-term personal, professional and financial success, by helping to make their degrees more valued by employers. Moreover, "employability can also enhance student engagement and motivation, which can lead to better results and improved institutional rankings and reputation" (Mohee, 2019). Likewise, employers and policy makers value universities that forefront employability, because the attributes contained within employability are broadly transferable within and among work opportunities and because the skill sets contained in employability are often sourced, in part, from the needs of the workforce as a whole. This helps reassure employers that graduates are ready for the needs of the real-life work world.

Employability assesses the readiness of students to enter the workforce in both meaningful and practical ways. It also demonstrates how well institutions are preparing students to move from the theoretical landscape of the university to the practical arena of work. For employers, governments and community members, employability also signals the potential of graduates to stimulate opportunities, both economic and social, through the application of adaptive, innovative and current skill sets and mind sets, developed in part during a student's course of study.

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Statement of the Problem

The research was motivated by the fact that most Ghanaian graduates are regarded as unemployable; many of them fail to secure a job many years after graduation (Sarkodie & Adom, 2015). This problem is conceivably due to the many factors and influences associated with how these graduates were educated and trained and the nature of the curriculum used to train them, in terms of both the subject matter knowledge and how they use that knowledge (Report, 2013). There is a consensus that Ghanaian HE and, in fact, that of all Sub-Saharan African countries facing similar problems, is not critical enough (Pitan, 2016), so graduates of similar disciplines appear to lack several skills and competencies, which involve also their self-concept, motivation, and professionalism (Baah-Boateng & Baffour-Awuah, 2015; Report, 2013) This research, therefore, examines the opinions of the key stakeholders in education in Ghanaian HEIs to understand this problem from their perspectives, and how it may be addressed using curriculum innovation (Egwuatu, 2013). Past researchers in this area have not studied this problem in a way that produces an employability enhancement framework (Sarkodie & Adom, 2015) that could be meaningfully applied by different stakeholder in dealing with graduate employability. These stakeholders are students, lecturers, HE policy makers and employers. With respect to employers, it is felt that the arrival of multinational companies in Ghana create an additional demand for skills that are more modern and require more professionalism. When the managers of these multinational companies and businesses feel that Ghanaian graduates lack the required skills, they are less likely to employ them than if the graduates are appropriately skilled. Indeed, some of the

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multinational companies and businesses are bringing their home-grown staff with them (Baffour-Awuah & Thompson, 2011). According to Aryeetey and Baah-Boateng (2015), the implications of the shortage of skills required by the economy vary. The non-availability of the skills demanded by the economy compels the country to rely on skills from other countries, which cost more, sometimes in foreign currencies (Aryeetey & Baah-Boateng, 2015).

Also, there has been no study of this nature in Ghana that connects the different aspects of graduate employability problem, including the Ghanaian context and influences, industry trends and new skills, students and lecturers" experiences, socio-cultural factors, and a consideration of curriculum support (teaching, learning and assessment strategies) for enhancing graduate employability (Report, 2013).

Regarding the literature base on employability education, there is a problem; for instance, most employability models in the literature are based on experiences in developed economies, such as the UK, Europe, Australia, Canada and the USA (Pitan, 2016; Underhill & Facilitator, 2014). Some of these employability models, therefore, may not work effectively in a developing country like Ghana, where there are recognisable differences in people"s cultural behaviour and the resource bases of HE institutions that would provide the facilities for training students (Egwuatu, 2013). Hence, the contemporary research on employability that has been applied to developed countries fails to address the reality of developing countries.

In this research, there is an emphasis on going beyond the theory, to use the insights from the study to develop an enabling framework to resolve the problems of graduate employability. Methodologically, the research that

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has been conducted in this area previously has been geared towards identifying the gaps in knowledge on employability issues, without using comprehensive stakeholder opinions to build an enabling framework for enhancing graduate employability. This requires a suitable research method that gives qualitative insights into the stakeholders" experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the role of employability and skills development courses in the University of Cape Coast school of through their various academic programmes. Specifically, the study seeks to

1. To determine the nature of courses undertaken by the University of Cape Coast School of Business.

2. To identify the kinds of employability and skills development courses embedded in the programmes of study at the School of Business

3. To determine the impact of the employability and skills development courses on students" career.

Research Questions

The Following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the nature of courses undertaken by the University of Cape Coast School of Business?

2. What are the kinds of employability and skills development courses embedded in the programmes of study at the School of Business?

3. What is the impact of the employability and skills development courses undertaken at the school of Business on students" career?

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Significance of Study

The current study which seeks to assess the role of employability and skills development courses: the case of school of business, University Of Cape Coast will be of great significance to policy makers of the School of Business of the University of Cape Coast. Firstly, the research is expected to unravel the content of courses of study at the school. Furthermore, the result of the study will indicate the extent to which the courses of study mounted enhance employability skill of its students. The results of the study, to a large extent, would indicate whether the contents of the courses studied have been fully met or otherwise. It is hoped that the results would add to knowledge on existing literature by indicating whether the courses of study are best suited for students of the University and also broadens the knowledge-base of current post-graduate students pursuing Human Resource Management Programmes.

Delimitation of the Study

Employability related concerns have become global as far as academia is concerned; however, the current study is restricted only to assess employability and skills development courses in the University of Cape Coast, using the School of Business as a case study. It is important to note that, results of the study were delimited to the scope of this work. Any other University in the country is excluded from this study. However, it could be generalised to cover other Business Schools with similar settings and characteristics as the University of Cape Coast School of Business.

Limitation of the Study

The initial stage of the field work, it was very difficult getting respondents since most of the Lecturers were busy discharging their routine

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duties and hence did not have ample time for the interviews. However, the problem was solved when convenient interview dates were scheduled with the respondents. A few of the respondents declined the interview due to personal reasons. However, since the target respondents were lecturers, respondents who opted out were replaced with other respondents. Another major challenge was transcribing the recorded interviews to text. This exercise was time consuming because attention to details was very relevant. Even though the process delayed, the in-depth interviews recorded were successfully transcribed.

Definition of Terms

Employability: Employability as the ability of graduate to get a satisfying job (Harvey, 2001).

Course of study: refers to series of courses which students are required to complete prior to earning a diploma or otherwise.

Organisation of the Study

The study is organised in five chapters. Chapter One covers the introduction of the study which centred on the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study. Chapter Two presented the review of related literature, with emphasis on specified concepts, highlighting the theoretical frameworks as well as related empirical studies on the research questions that guided the study. Chapter Three paid attention to the methodology that was used in the study. This comprises the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure. Chapter Four concentrated

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on the discussion of the results on the basis of the research questions formulated to guide the study. Eventually, Chapter Five provided a summary of the research process, key findings, conclusion, recommendations based on the findings of the study and areas for further research.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on employability and introduces the themes that form the foundation for this study. It examines employability concepts and meanings, together with the historical evolution of the concept of employability. The chapter further investigates relevant models of employability, graduate employability in higher learning institutions and strategies for embedding employability in the curriculum and conceptual frameworks.

The focus of the literature is on clarifying the basic concepts, approaches and models used by previous researchers. Secondly, additional literature specific to skills development and curriculum constructs is presented in this chapter.

Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) argues that education increases individuals" productivity, which consequently enhances job performance. As such, education provides marketable skills and abilities relevant to job performance, and thus the more highly educated people are, the more successful they will be in labour markets in terms of both incomes and work opportunities (Cai, 2012). This theory does not lean much towards the acquisition of generic skills to succeed in the workplace, it focuses more on the educational knowledge acquired through higher education to be successful in work. Human capital theory predicts the assumption that the economic prosperity and functioning of a nation depends on its human capital

development (Becker, 1964). The origin of human capital goes back to classical economics. After the manifestation of human capital as a theory, Schultz (1961) recognized human capital as being one of the factors that contribute towards economic growth (Kown, 2009). Swanson (2001) defined human capital as an investment in people, while Van Loo and Rocco (2004) stated that it is an investment in skills and knowledge. Often times, this investment is employed to enhance knowledge and skills of employees in hopes of increasing worker productivity (Swanson, 2001; Van Loo & Rocco, 2004). Higher education systems can increase human capital by improving the skills of its graduates (P. T. Knight & Yorke, 2006). Becker (1964) posited that education and training are the most important investments in human capital. In addition, Van Loo & Rocco (2004) concluded that, in early human capital literature, educational background was considered one of the most important determinants of human capital

Concept of Employability

Employability is an ambiguous term with various interpretations. Most literature associates the term (at least in part) with graduates obtaining a job (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; P. T. Knight & Yorke, 2006; Pierce, 2002). Hillage & Pollard (1998) defined employability as individual‟s capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment when the opportunity arises. In the 1980s the need for organisations to be more flexible so as to stay competitive in the increasingly globalised market led to talks about a new arrangement between employers and employees whereby employers invest in employees training and development, and if the

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company needed to let them go, they would not have problems finding other employment (Handy, 1989).

Employability is not only situated at the centre of employer-employee relationships, but seen as one of the key criteria for career success (Carbery & Garavan, 2005). Traditional careers, where employees climbed the organisational hierarchy, usually within one organisation which guaranteed relative job security, were replaced by boundary-less (Arthur & Rousseau, 2012) careers, which embraced change and flexibility. In these career models employability rather than employment came to the fore. Periods of not having a job were now accepted as normal, and it was employability that mattered.

Employable skills are the abilities that are directly pertinent to obtaining and maintaining work (Harvey, 2001; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). They are comprised of the generic and discipline-specific skills required for performance in a work situation; and career management skills, divided into two categories of competence: self-management and career building. Career management skills and knowledge are essential to employability in that they play a large part in determining which, to what extent, in what manner, when and where generic and discipline-specific skills are learned, displayed (e.g. in applying for a job) and used (Bridgstock, 2009).

The concept of employability continues to be applied within a range of different contexts and to both those in work and those seeking work. Accordingly, while it is simple enough to assign employability" a straightforward dictionary definition is usually „the character or quality of being employable arriving at a working definition is a far more complex process. Perhaps understandably, employers have tended to view

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employability as primarily a characteristic of the individual. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) defined employability as the possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the needs of employers and customers and thereby help to realise his or her aspirations and potential in work. The UK government defines employability as the development of skills and adaptable workforces in which all those capable of work are encouraged to develop the skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (Clarke, 2008). Again, employability is the relative capacity of an individual to achieve meaningful employment (Lin et al., 2003). Lees (2002) see the concept of employability as a term used in a variety of contexts with a range of meanings that can lack clarity and precision as an operational concept.

Lees (2002b) of the Institute for Employment Studies carried out a report on developing a framework for policy analysis on employability and came out with findings that included the fact that employability is about having the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required. To the individual, employability depends upon assets in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, the way these assets are used and deployed, presentation of assets to potential employers, the context within which the individual works, e.g. labour market, personal circumstances.

Employability is a multi-dimensional concept, and there is a need to distinguish between factors relevant to obtaining a job and factors relevant to the preparation for work (Little, 2001). Employability is not just about

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students making deposits in a bank of skills (Morley, 2001). Knight and Yorke (2001) consider the concept of employability to be a synergic combination of personal qualities, skills of various kinds and subject understanding. It is a concept that is much more complex than the relatively restrictive key skills agenda, as emphasized by Dearing (1997) which has obscured a greater understanding of employability (Knight & Yorke, 2001; Yorke, n.d.). Flowing from this, there are two main concepts of employability (Knight & Yorke, 2001; Yorke, n.d.). These are the educational concept relating to the ability of graduates to tackle „graduate‟ jobs. This means that the employability of graduates relates to their being equipped for a job and capable of being employed, rather than actual job acquisition (Harvey, 2001; Van der Heijden, 2002). 2) The ability of the graduate to get a job – any job. The second concept is the use of the Employability Performance Indicators (EPIs), however it is the first concept that most practitioners in HR are primarily concerned with. Good student learning and the curriculum, teaching and assessment that goes with it, describes „education for employability‟ well (P. Knight & Yorke, 2001). This implies that curricula designed to enhance students‟ employability are also desirable on purely educational grounds. It is possible to see both the traditional academic education and key skills as being subsets of „employability‟. It is difficult to maintain that academic progress is not enhanced by high standard of literacy and numeracy, by a range of communication skills and the ability to work in groups or teams, and by learning how to learn effectively (Atkins, 1999).

From the employers‟ point of view, employability is the propensity of the graduate to exhibit attributes that employers anticipate will be necessary

for the future effective functioning of their organisation (Harvey, 1997). Increasingly, graduates need to be more flexible in response to the growing number of career changes experienced through life for many people, because of the increase in short term contracts, part-time work, outsourcing and homeworking (Harvey, 2000).

Van der Heijden (2002) pointed out that employment and employability are not the same. Being employed means having a job, being employable means having the qualities needed to maintain employment and progress in the workplace. Employability then is about producing graduates who are capable and able, and these impacts upon all areas of university life, in terms of the delivery of academic programmes and extra curricula activities.
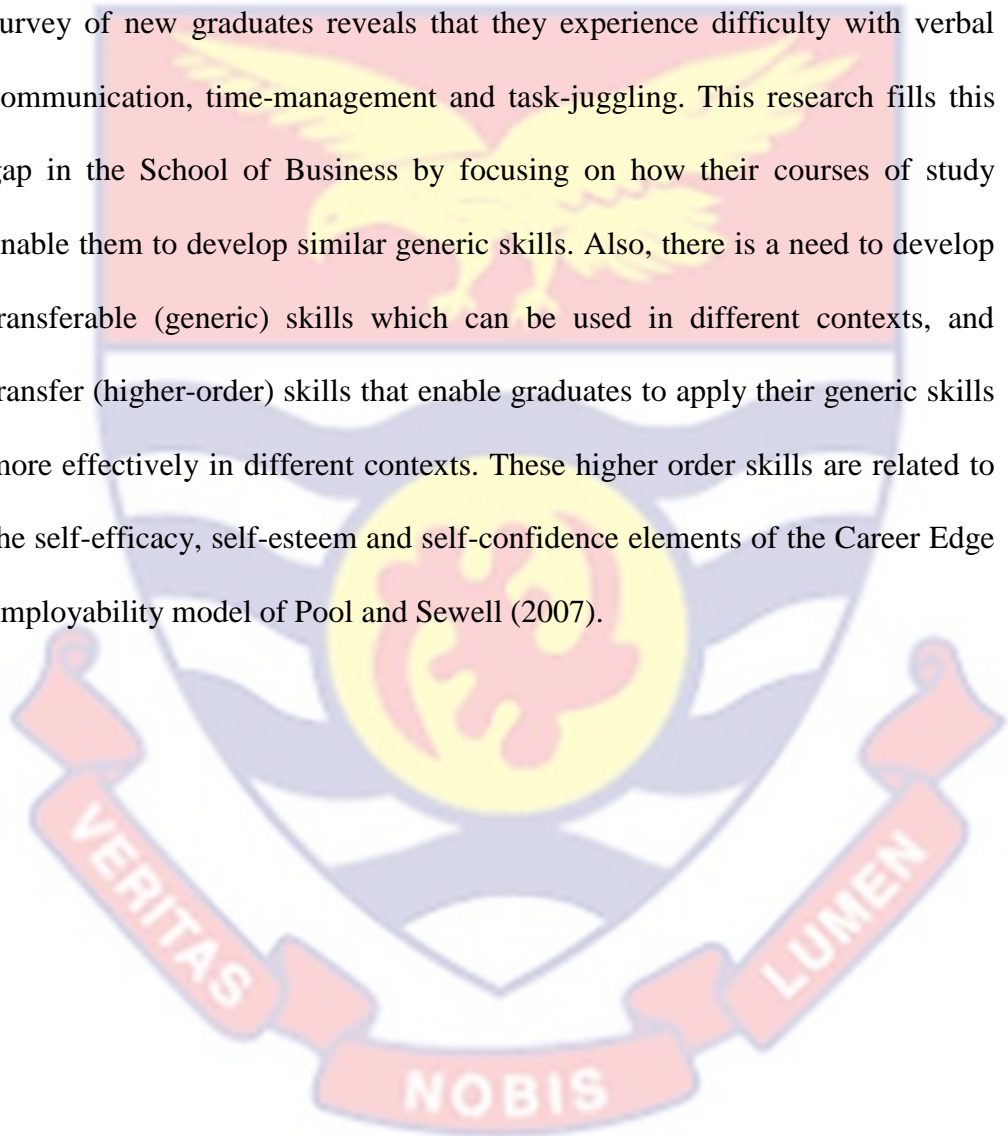
Graduate Employability

One of the research objectives of this study is to determine the nature of courses undertaken by the University Of Cape Coast School Of Business.

To this, a clear understanding of graduate employability is vital for operationalising this research and also for the implementation of the employability agenda for lecturers, students and policymakers (stakeholders) in general to appreciate the outcome of the employability-related activities (Maher & Graves, 2008). The employability of a graduate is related to his/her ability to exhibit attributes that employers require for the effective functioning of their business. Graduates therefore need to be flexible because of the growth in the number of short-term contracts and part-time work (*BIS (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills*, 2011; Yusof et al., 2013). The perspective of Higher Learning Institutions on employability is producing capable graduates with the ability to learn (De Weert, 2011; Harvey, 2000).

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Importantly, (Knight & Yorke, 2006) notes that, while employers' dissatisfaction with the quality of graduates is longstanding, there has been insufficient research on the extent to which the graduates are themselves dissatisfied with how effectively their education prepares them for the world of work. For example, a UK HE Funding Council for England (HEFCE) survey of new graduates reveals that they experience difficulty with verbal communication, time-management and task-juggling. This research fills this gap in the School of Business by focusing on how their courses of study enable them to develop similar generic skills. Also, there is a need to develop transferable (generic) skills which can be used in different contexts, and transfer (higher-order) skills that enable graduates to apply their generic skills more effectively in different contexts. These higher order skills are related to the self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence elements of the Career Edge employability model of Pool and Sewell (2007).

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A model of graduate employability development
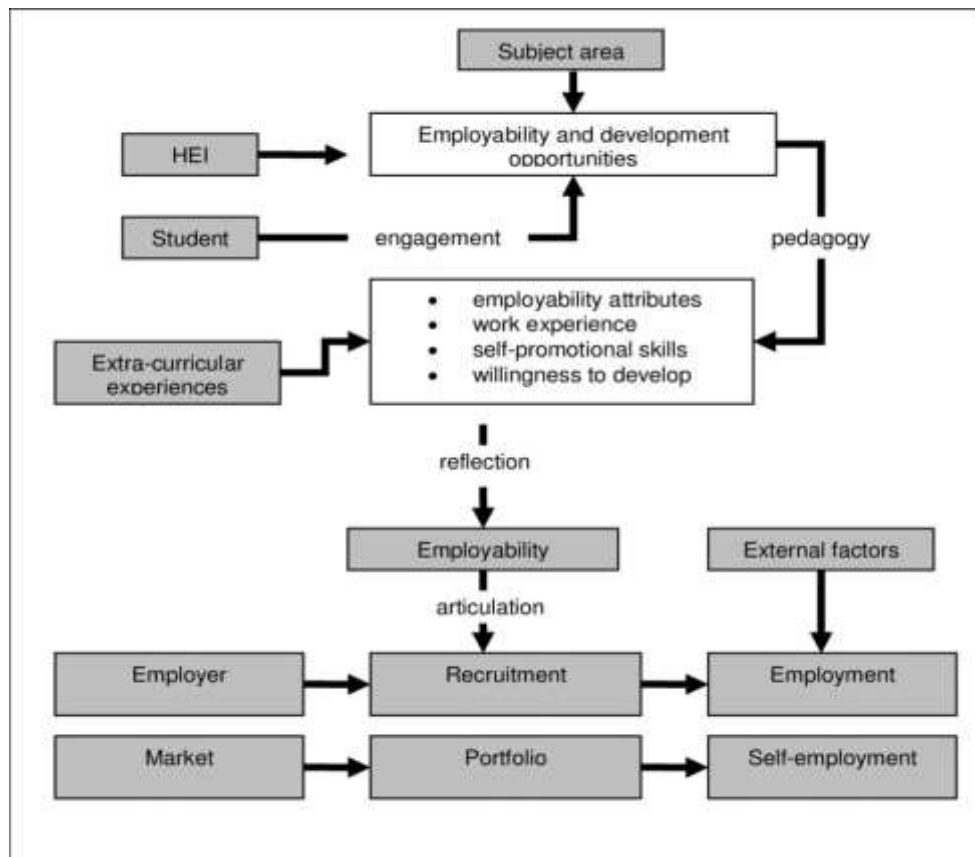
Figure 1: A model of graduate employability development Articulation .
Source; Maher and Graves (2008)

This research intends to conduct a more detailed study of employability and skills development courses in the University of Cape Coast, using the School of Business as a case study in a way that contextualises the existing employability models in Ghana as a developing country.

It is envisaged that the research findings and framework will enable the School of Business to develop their courses of study bearing in mind the development of the employability skills of its students. The lecturers themselves will be able to use the model to improve the curriculum along the three key dimensions of learning, teaching and assessment, related to the

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research on employability, which they need to improve their curriculum practices.

A model of graduate employability development Articulation

Source; Maher and Graves (2008)

Figure 2.1 depicts the many facets of employability development. A closer look at the model, at least from the perspective of this research, suggests the following:

1. The need to engage learners in activities to develop their employability skills through relevant curriculum innovation. This enhances all aspects of their employability skills; for example, individual attributes, work-related skills, awareness of job opportunities, how to match their requirements, and proactive and personal development planning (PDP).

2. The importance of teaching, learning, and assessment (TLA)

   curriculum practices that enhance learners" capacity to reflect on their learning in light of how they could apply their learning to recruitment issues, understand employers" requirements and how their learning matches them, appreciate the changing labour market dynamics (including how continual learning and personal development will enable them to keep abreast of these), and build a portfolio of skills and competencies which will give them a competitive advantage in the labour market or in self-employment - in other words, make them inherently entrepreneurial (Bell, 2016; Sewell & Pool, 2010).

Factors affecting graduate employability

According to Finch et al. (2013) graduate employability is affected by five high-order skills. These factors include Soft-skills, Problem-solving

skills, Job-specific functional skills and Pre-graduate experience. The researchers categorized 17 factors that influence graduate employability through the subjective perspectives of employers when they consider engaging new graduates. The five main factors among the 17 mentioned are: *written communication skills, verbal communication skills, listening skills, professionalism interpersonal skills* under Soft skills; Problem-solving skills. Problem-solving skills has four sub factors: *critical thinking skills, creativity, leadership skills, and adaptability;* Job-specific functional skills, including: *job-specific competencies, technical skills, and knowledge of software*; Pre-graduate experience, which encompasses *pre-graduate work experience* which the researchers show may include in-programme experiential learning opportunities (e.g. part-time or summer employment) and *professional confidence*; and last but not least the higher-order skills which include: *institutional-level reputation, programme-level and academic performance.*

Finch et al. (2013) used a realistic mixed method approach to interview 30 employers and undertook a further empirical examination of 115 employers. They linked learning outcomes to the development of soft-skills, which indicates the importance of learning outcomes that increase the employability of new graduates. Subsequently, employers have made soft-skills a priority when hiring graduates but attribute less importance to academic reputation. This indicates that possessing the necessary skills, attitudes and behaviour determines an individual's chance of getting, keeping and progressing in a job, while the context in which the individual seeks employment also plays a significant role in the transition, and work culture affects how employability is enhanced (Green, 2013).

Similarly, (Pitan, 2016) investigated graduate employability in Nigeria, a developing Sub-Saharan country, to propose a model for enhancing this. She identifies eight factors which include: a poor curriculum system; a poor learning environment; the inadequate funding of tertiary education; graduates and employers having divergent views on employability; poor guidance and counselling and career services; a lack of collaboration between HE stakeholders, graduates and employers; and inadequate industry work experience.

It is worth noting that the divergent views of graduates and employers, as stated by Pitan (2016), brought forward the factors that employers value, such as good communication skills, a good attitude, critical and analytical thinking skills, and a strong CV, as vital requirements for employment, while graduates mainly considered their academic achievements as essential. Furthermore, Green et al. (2013) identifies work culture as a factor that affects the employability of the individual in an organisation. Based on these studies, it is suggested that soft skills, the environmental context, the work culture, a poor learning environment and a poor curriculum system may be affecting graduate employability

The learning outcomes of a course of study are defined as the „knowledge, skills and attitudes that students are expected to internalise and be capable of performing when they complete a course‟, according to Reich et al. (2016). They agree that learning outcomes logically focus on the knowledge, skills and attitudes taught on all courses (Reich et al., 2016).

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Measures to Promote Employability

Embedding employability skills into teaching is not an attack on academic freedom in terms of content, but a request that academics consider how they teach their subject (Coopers & Lybrand, 1998; Harvey, 2000). Harvey (2000) advocates the view that the primary role of HE is to train students by enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities and to empower them as lifelong critical and reflective learners. Empowering learners is about giving students control over the educational process and their post-educational lives, and Harvey (2000), suggests that it is debatable how serious academia is in achieving these ends.

It is essential that any changes to the curriculum are owned by the staff delivering the modules, if they are to be successfully implemented. Atlay and Harris (2000) comment that it is important to work with the culture and values of the institution and of HE itself. A culture that strives to improve the learning environment for the benefit of students and staff is essential for the successful implementation of change. Traditional academic systems at universities may operate against good teaching and teaching innovation since the emphasis for promotion is on research output and quality rather than improvements to the curriculum. De La Harpe et al. (2000) have found this to be the case in Australia. However, public acknowledgement of good teaching is beginning to occur in some universities, for example, teaching professorships in US universities and the incorporation of effective teaching into promotion criteria in New Zealand (Skilbeck & Connell, 1996).

Dunne and Rawlins (2000) point out that the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) lacked a clear strategy or theoretical orientation for generic

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skills teaching (or employability for that matter). One of the purposes of HE is to help students to improve their higher-level competencies and skills to enhance their long-term employability (DfES, 2002). Knight & Yorke (2001) argue that the notion of employability can be embedded in any academic subject in HE without compromising core academic freedoms. The methods which are chosen for teaching a subject will, to varying extents, assist students to develop key and other skills. The development of key skills will facilitate learning of the subject through, for example, the use of IT for information retrieval. So, it is a two-way dialogue between subject and skills (Yorke, 2001b).

At the core of the employability debate is whether the teaching of employability skills should be embedded into courses of study or designed as courses on its own. Skills are best developed when they are integrated across the curriculum and students are allowed to develop higher levels of skills as they progress through the programme of study (De La Harpe et al., 2000). By embedding these skills (not just skills but also attributes) it gives them the same status as knowledge and obliges lecturers to cover them, however, Bolton options ensure that skills are covered competently (Tait & Godfrey, 1999).

Knight and Yorke (2001) feel that by having separate key skills modules where the skill development is not fully integrated into the curriculum, key skills – and by association, employability, are being trivialised. For the most part then, the development of employability skills and attributes should be integrated within the curriculum. By outlining the personal and key skills provision in module accreditation forms, all aspects of

the curriculum are seen to be interwoven, with a coherent approach adopted. At the University of Luton (Atlay & Harris, 2000) the module templates set the operational context within which the students are expected to be working, concerning knowledge and understanding, analysis, creativity and evaluation. This template defines the broad skill areas which the university expects its lecturers to develop in their students; how they define the meaning of the skills concerning the subject is a matter of individual judgment. The attention of students may need to be drawn to skills, so that they are fully aware of the processes and experiences they are undertaking. Improving employability is concerned with complex learning, involving potentially years of practice and the space to make mistakes and improve judgment. Students need feedback that will prompt strategic thinking and reflection upon the situation.

Atkins (1999) feels however, that if every student emerges with the same repertoire of employability skills, any market advantage would disappear. Indeed, Atkins advocates a change of emphasis, where employability skills are left out of the curriculum altogether and are addressed after graduation when graduates are either looking for work or are in transition to their first jobs. However, this will be too late for many students who are involved in job hunt. Since the development of skills and attributes requires practice over a long-time frame, it would seem impossible to leave the development of these until after graduation.

Higher Learning measures to promote employability skills and attributes indicates that the development of employability skills and attributes in HE should be integrated within the curriculum (eg de la Harpe et al 2000, Knight and York (2002). Knight and Yorke state that students should be

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entitled to experiences in HE that develop understandings, skills, self-theories and reflection and that this good learning and education improves employability.

In practice, HE approaches to employability skills and attributes promotion in graduates vary extensively: they include support in career decision-making and job search, development of employability attributes as part of study programmes and personal development planning. The United Kingdom Commission for Employability and Skills (2009a) and Universities United Kingdom Confederation of British Industry (2009) have produced reports that include numerous case studies of employability measures adopted by HEIs. These case studies illustrate how some universities are changing the way courses are taught to build employability skills into the curriculum, including providing a work-based experience. These case studies are often descriptive but some do include assessments of impact such as obtaining a better degree and boosting confidence. Many of these case studies lack evaluative evidence to show the longer-term impact on graduates" employability. This is often because universities have not conducted evaluations or have limited data on longer-term outcomes. The Harper Adams University College reported that 99% of their students who obtained first degrees from full-time courses in 2006/2007 were employed or in further study within six months of completing their degrees and attributed this to their Advancing Skills for Professionals in the Rural Economy (ASPIRE) programme.

It should be noted that there is more to employability than securing a job, such as making a productive contribution to the organisation, economy

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and society, but these examples provide indications of the value added by their courses and initiatives. While relatively few in number, research studies conducted on the longer-term value and impact of HEI employability measures indicate that work placements can be particularly effective. Hall et al., (2009) report that overall, it appears that the placement year is equipping students well with opportunities for self-development and personal effectiveness in a dynamic teamwork environment and that these qualities are key to employability. Hall et al (2009) Mason et al (2006) researched the impact of different kinds of HE employability skills initiatives in 34 departments in eight different universities on graduates" labour market performance. They found placements and employer involvement in course design and delivery to be the most effective. Structured work experience has clear positive effects on the ability of graduates, firstly, to find employment within six months of graduation and, secondly, to secure employment in graduate-level jobs. The latter job quality measure is also positively and significantly associated with employer involvement in degree course design and delivery. However, there is no evidence that the emphasis given by university departments to the teaching, learning and assessment of Employability skills have a significant independent effect on either of the labour market outcomes considered here.

Mason et al., (2006) note that this is consistent with findings of previous studies such as McKnight (2002), who found that the effects of structured work experience for students can be relatively long-lasting, including a 4.6% salary premium attached to participation in work experience three and half years after graduation, after controlling for degree discipline

and a range of personal and university characteristics. Mason and colleagues" findings regarding the lack of impact of university teaching, learning and assessment of employability skills are interesting labour market activity is relatively narrow. For example, it might be that promoting teamwork and communication skills will have an impact on graduates" later work performance.

Chapter Summary

From the above, it is clear that employability is when the employee possesses skills that are cherished by employers so that he or she can move comfortably within the labour market. Theories and concepts abound in matters of the promotion of employability. For some authorities, it is the employers who must set the tone and guide the employees to undertake employability enhancing skills. Others put the responsibility of helping learners develop employability skills on the nature of the courses studied. Whilst others believe that it within the domain of the employees to undertake programmes that would improve employability.
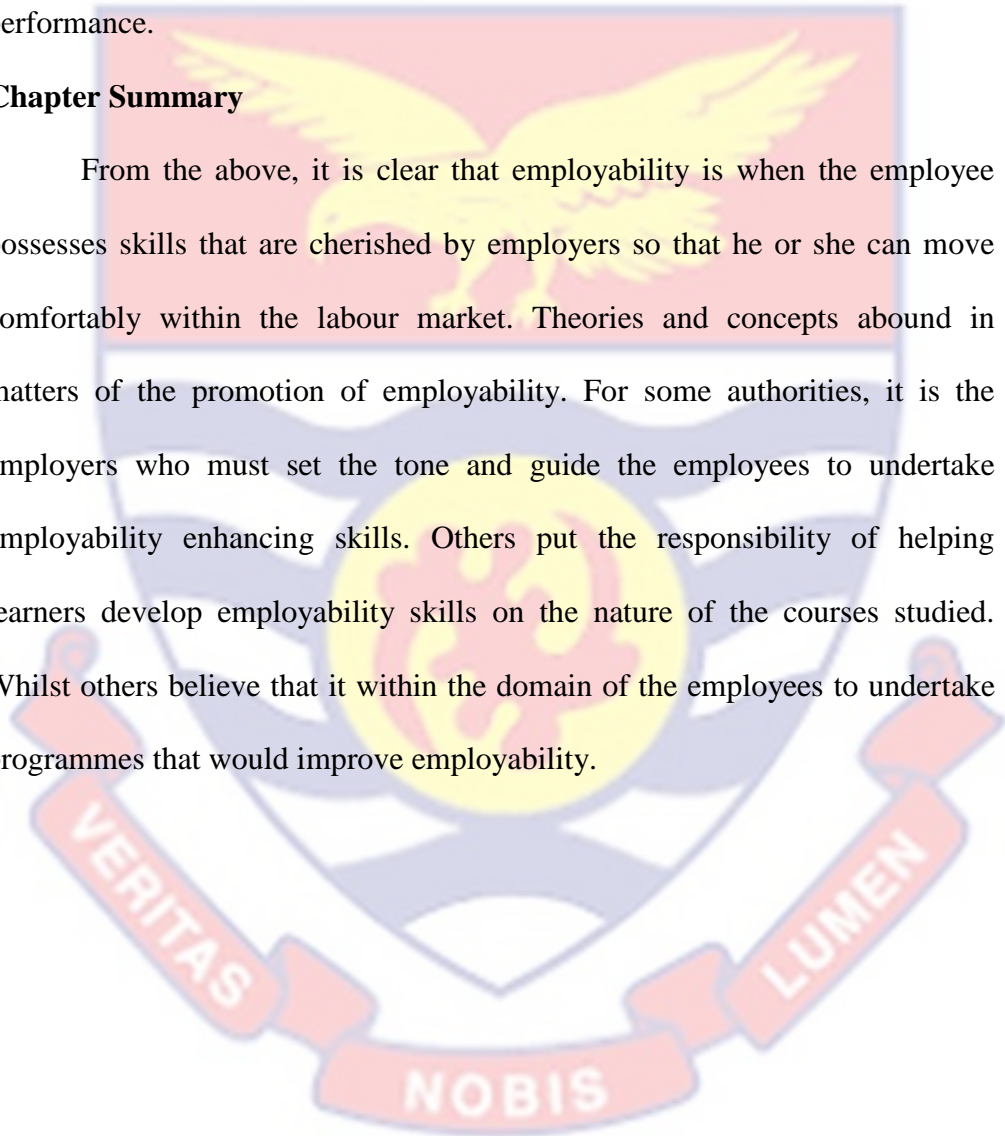
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This section discusses the methods used for gathering the data for this study. It outlines the research design, population, sampling procedure, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data processing and analysis and the summary.

Research Design

Yin (2009) posits that research design is the logic that links the data which is to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the initial questions of study. In a more informal explanation, a research design is an action plan for getting from *here* to *there*. Where *here* may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and *there* also defined as some set of conclusions and answers about these questions.

According to Creswell (2014) there are three main research approaches available to studies in the Humanities and the Social Sciences: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Qualitative research describes social phenomena as they occur naturally without the artificiality that sometimes surrounds experimental or survey research (Hancock, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). There are several research designs available when adopting the qualitative approach to research, some of these are: ethnography, phenomenology, case study among others. This study therefore uses the case study approach because it assesses employability and skills development courses citing the of School of Business, University of Cape Coast This

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enabled dialogue and eavesdropping, listening in to capture the essence of what is perceived by subjects.

Creswell (2014) further observes that the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. This study does not hope to make external statistical generalisations because its goal is not to make inferences about the underlying population, but to obtain insights into particular educational processes and practices that exist within a specific location and context. The insights were thus obtained from the processes that consisted of the analysis and integration of the views of the sampled participants.

Population

According to Kassu (2019) population is the total membership of a defined class of people, objects, or events. In research, population means all the members, individuals or cases of target of the study. This target is normally determined by the purpose of the study. Therefore, the population for the proposed study would consist of all the lecturers of the school of Business of the university of cape coast. The target population of the study is ten (10) comprising of seven (7) lecturers and 3 past students of the school of business.

Sampling Procedure

A qualitative researcher selects participants that will help him or her answer the research questions. Since the primary purpose of this study which is to assess employability and skills development courses in the University of Cape Coast with the focus on the School of Business, respondents who were

lecturers at the School of Business as well as past students of the School were selected. The justification for this number is based on the assertions of Bryman (2012), that it is impossible to use large numbers in qualitative research. In addition to what Bryman (2012) said, the respondents (lecturers) are responsible for the delivering of the academic knowledge which is imparted to students. The past students are also first-hand users of the knowledge obtained from the school.

The appropriate number of participants chosen for research will depend on the type of research question, the type of qualitative approach used in the study, material and time resources as well as the number of researchers involved in the study.

Seven (7) lecturers were selected from the seven departments of the school of business and three (3) past students of the school of business. This is because the researcher was interested in assessing in-depth, employability and skills development courses in the University of Cape Coast, a case study of the School of Business.

Data Collection Instrument

Spencer and Snape (2003) assert that qualitative data collection methods include observations, in-depth and semi-structured interviews, group discussions and document analysis among others. Interview was used as the main data collection tool. Kvale (1996) explains interviews as interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. Face-to-face interviews were employed by the researcher to obtain open-ended responses. This is also because the researcher needed the data to reflect the lived experiences of the participants (lecturers and past students). According to

Lindlof and Taylor (2002:179) "appropriate experience in a scene is usually the key consideration in selecting participants, those persons who have been through the critical events, career paths of their institutions and groups are likely to deliver a rich lode of information."

According to Cohen *et al.,* (2006) the outcome of the interview process is what is "inside a person's head". The development of an interview guide aided the researcher in her questioning. It allowed her to adjust to the verbal style of the participants (Lindlof & Taylor 2002), by that some questions were broken down into smaller units and others were also rephrased, to help achieve a clearer understanding of the questions.

Data Collection Procedure

 Prior to the data collection, a letter of introduction was taken from the School of Business, University of Cape Coast to seek for permission and interview appointment from the selected lecturers of the School of Business. When the permission was granted, the researcher took the opportunity to book appointment with them on the appropriate days and times to engage them in the face-to-face interview. This type of interview was also used because the researcher needed the data to reflect the lived experiences of the participants. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002:179) "appropriate experience in a scene is usually the key consideration in selecting participants, those persons who have been through the critical events, career paths of their institutions and groups are likely to deliver a rich lode of information." Data was collected on the days and times given to the researcher. On the side of the students, the researcher called those that were known by her, booked appointment with

them and data was collected on the days and times given to the researcher. All interview sections were tape recorded.

Data Processing and Analysis

The researcher adopted semi structured interview because it offered sufficient flexibility to approach different participants differently while still covering the same areas of the data collection. Semi-structured interviews enabled the participants to, in some cases, shift the topic and contribute their own line of thought as they wish to do so. The aim was to obtain accurate uninhabited accounts from informants that were based on their knowledge and experiences. Fetterman (1998) suggests that the use of semi-structured interviews also helps the researcher to explore further interesting dimensions that are not envisaged prior to the interviews. This view is endorsed by Kitchin (2000:43) who states that interviews allow participants to "express and contextualize their true feelings rather than having them pigeon-holed into boxes with little or no opportunity for contextual explanations"

The researcher created rapport with the participants in order to put them in a relaxed mood for the interview. An informal approach was adopted by the researcher, which according to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), sets the tone that relaxes individuals, making it comfortable for them to share their intimate and professional insights. Some techniques which the researcher adopted to create rapport among the participants include an introduction of the researcher herself to the participants, researcher's clarity of purpose for the research, and encouraging the participants to bring up issues that could be relevant to the research topic.

Interviews with the lecturers lasted between 30 to 50 minutes and that with the past students also lasted between 25 to 40 minutes. All interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview guide. Again, the interviews were recorded with a recording software application on the researcher's phone. The recorded interviews were played back over and over again before eventually transcribing them. After transcribing, the researcher did a close reading of the text paying particular attention to issues that centred on the research questions and objectives. Emerging themes were then generated from the issues.

Ethical Considerations

According to Saunders, Philip and Thornhill, (2012) research ethics relates to questions about how to formulate and clarify a research topic, design a research and gain access, collect data, process and store data, analyse data and write up research findings in a moral and responsible way. Ethical considerations in the field are inevitable when the work involves others, whether they are colleagues, respondents, assistants, or people in positions of authority (Perecman, & Curran, 2006).

Three (3) main areas of ethical issues were identified by the researcher as explained by Kvale (1996). These issues were: confidentiality, informed consent of participants were sought for their participation in the interviews. Again, they were informed about the interviewer's intention to record the interviews and recording were done upon the consents of participants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter paid attention to the methodology that was used in the study. This comprises the research design, population, sampling procedure,

data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data processing and

analysis and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

The chapter presents the results and discussion of the study. The research sought to assess employability and skills development courses in the University of Cape Coast, using the School of Business as a case study. The researcher used semi structured interviews to obtain information from respondents.

In order to put the findings of the study into perspective, the academic profile of the respondents, specifically, their professional qualifications and academic qualifications were considered. Majority of the respondents (lecturers) had obtained doctor of philosophy degrees. Also, on the number of years that the respondents (lecturers) have worked with the university, the results discovered that these lecturers have worked for a period ranging from 12 years to 6 years in their respective fields.

  On the part of the past students, it was revealed that they had obtained masters in various programmes from the University of Cape Coast School of Business and have obtained employment in various field of endeavours after completion.

To begin the discussions of the findings of this study, the following research questions guided the data collection process and subsequently the analysis.

The research questions that guided the study are:

1. What are the nature of courses undertaken by the University of Cape Coast School of Business?

2. What are the kinds of employability and skills development courses embedded in the programmes of study at the School of Business?

3. What is the impact of the employability and skills development courses undertaken at the school of Business on students" career?

Significance of Study

1. **Research Question 1:** What are the natures of courses undertaken by the University Of Cape Coast School Of Business?

The responses given from the interviews with the lecturers had been coded under the following themes: The nature of courses undertaken by the University Of Cape Coast School Of Business, Relevance of the courses to employability and skills development, and incorporating above mentioned soft skills into course area.

Nature of courses undertaken by the University Of Cape Coast School Of Business

This theme relates to some of the courses assigned to the lecturers,

Lecturer 1 said;

> *Some of the courses are entrepreneurship, new venture creation, small enterprise development, business development services for small enterprises.*
>
> *So, these are some of them* (Entrepreneurship
>
> Lecturer).

Lecturer 2 mentioned that;

I have taught principles of accounting, international business,

international marketing, international finance, intermediate

accounting, and now reporting.

Currently, I am teaching auditing (Auditing Lecturer).

Lecturer 3 said;

Some of the courses assigned to me are; Information

systems, project management and public administration, policy

analysis (Management

Lecturer).

Lecturer 4 stated that;

I teach business communication, law and proceedings, industrial

relations, industrial and organizational psychology, general

psychology and human relations in Ghanaian organizations

(Business Communication

Lecturer).

Lecturer 5 had this to say:

I teach International Human Resource Management,

Strategic Human Resource Management ... (International Human

Resource Lecturer).

Compensation and Performance, Introduction to Management and

Human Resource Development.

(Compensation Lecturer)

Lecturer 6 added that:

I teach these two main courses; International Human

Resource Management and also Strategic Human Resource Management. (Strategic Human Resource Management Lecturer)

Lecturer 7 stated that:

I have been teaching Quantitative Analysis, Introduction to Business and Research Methods. (Management Lecturer2)

Deducing from the above transcripts of the respondents, it can be seen that the courses assigned to the lecturers were; entrepreneurship, new venture creation, small enterprise development, business development services for small enterprises, principles of accounting, international business, international marketing, international finance, intermediate accounting, reporting, auditing, information systems, project management, public administration, policy analysis, business communication, law and proceedings, industrial relations, industrial and organizational psychology, general psychology and human relations in Ghanaian organizations, Quantitative

Analysis, Introduction to Business and Research Methods, International Human Resource Management, Strategic Human Resource Management,

Compensation and Performance, Introduction to Management and Human Resource Development. It can be stated that these courses are assigned to the lecturers by virtue of their mastery of knowledge in the courses as well their areas of specializations.

Relevance of the Courses to Skills Development: The purpose of this subtheme was to know the importance of the courses taught by these lecturers to skills development. This sub-theme is gleaned from the following interview excerpts;

Lecturer 1

It is very relevant, because once you talk about entrepreneurship, skills development is very central aspect of entrepreneurship. So, skills development right from the office related skills to specific entrepreneurship related skills such as; preparing concept papers, conducting market surveys, developing a business plan and even marshalling resources to start your business… (Entrepreneurship

Lecturer).

Lecturer 2 has this to say;

They are very relevant. We are in the school of business and basically, I teach accounting courses. For somebody to be called accounting practitioner, these are the skills you may to have acquired. So, all my courses I teach are very relevant and straight to the point (Auditing Lecturer)

Lecturer 3 had this to say:

Yes, the courses I teach are very relevant. Take for instance Information systems. In this day and age where information is everything, teaching this course is very relevant. Talk of project

Management. It is very relevant because it helps to measure efficiency and progress… (Management Lecturer 1)

Lecturer 4 said:

We give assignments that require doing presentations. This also improves skills needed in the office. You must also know that group work or team work helps to cultivate team work among students. Most importantly,   Business communication is also purely skills base and helps to prepare students for the future. (Business Communication Lecturer)

Lecturer 5 had this to say:

The world is now a one marketplace. The course I teach is relevant because students know how to handle HR matters as related to the international front. The relevance cannot be under emphasised… (Compensation Lecturers)

Lecturer 6 added that:

All courses are relevant. Because we tailor what we teach to suit what the job market expects. It all depends on the reproduction of the knowledge on the job market… (Strategic Human Resource Management Lecturer)

Lecturer 7 added this:

… of course. The course I teach is very relevant. As a matter of fact, every course is engineered to tackle specific issues and also give relevant knowledge to the student…. (Management lecturer 2)

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With reference to the above transcripts, the lecturers believe that the courses taught are relevant to skills development. The entrepreneurship lecturer for example highlighted the fact that skills development is a central part of the course. This is because, the course gives the students the skills in preparing concept papers, conducting market surveys, developing a business plan, organizing resources to start a business, developing their presentations skills and group work or team work skills. In the same direction, it can be observed from the above dialogues that all the courses are very relevant and straight to the point as far as their areas of specialisations are concerned. In addition, the courses taught are relevant in the sense that, the students are taught how to analyse policies objectively and professionally. Additionally, the lecturers portrayed through the interview that their courses train the students to acquire much skills required on the job market and also to communicate both vertically and horizontally, in essence, the courses help the students to have knowledge on how to improve their analytical skills, problem solving skills, communication skills and interpersonal skills, just to mention a few. These skills, employers believe are directly linked to the success of their respective organizations.

Incorporating Specific Skills into the Courses Taught

The purpose of this sub-theme was to investigate how the following skills namely; problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, investigative skills, team communication, presentation skills, time management skills and negotiation skills were incorporated into the courses that are taught by the lecturers of the School of Business, University of Cape Coast. The responses are presented below;

Lecturer no. 1

> *So, for problem solving skills, that is part of whatever we teach almost every day. This is because we take the students through cases and also sometimes, we also ask them to even go out and interact with the entrepreneurs. It depends on the level, that is the MBA students and the undergraduates…* (Entrepreneurship Lecturer).

Lecturer 2 had this to say;

> *All of them basically are incorporated with the courses I teach. For example, the problem-solving skills, many of the times, case studies are given to the students and they are actually required to solve them. Critical thinking is very*
>
> *necessary when they are solving problems like accounting…* (Auditing Lecturer).

Lecturer 3 responded by saying;

> *For these things sometimes, when you give them assignments and they are working in groups, trying to brainstorm, trying to bring your ideas together to solve the problem given to the group. So, the assignment they are doing tends to help them improve their problem-solving skills and their negotiation skills, team communication, investigative skills, critical thinking skills* (Management
>
> Lecturer 1)

Lecturer 4 added the following;

> *Students are giving projects that tend to massage and develop these skills you mentioned. You see, its not likely that a student of this school will not know how to present or negotiate or be a critical thinker for*

example because of the way the courses are structured. Unless ofcourse, the student decided not to learn anything during their years of study here… (Business Communication Lecturer).

Lecturer 5

All the skills you are mentioning are soft skills and are not examined exclusively. These skills are needed very much on the job market you know its relevance. My course outline makes it possible for these skills to be exhibited or cultivated either way. (Compensation Lecturer)

Lecturer 6 contributed by saying; *trying to brainstorm, trying to bring your ideas together to solve the problem given to the group. So, the assignment they are doing tends to help them improve their problem-solving skills and their negotiation skills…*

(Strategic Juman Resource Management Lecturer)

Following the above transcripts, it is worth mentioning here that most of the respondents stated that skills such as; problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, investigative skills, team communication, presentation skills, time management skills and negotiation skills were incorporated into the courses that they teach.

The above notwithstanding, the Management Lecturer 7 said otherwise.

We do our best to teach students to use their minds but the reality is that all these problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, investigative skills, team communication, presentation skills, time management skills and negotiation skills you have mentioned is do not stand on their own… (Management Lecturer2).

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Research Question 2: What are the kinds of employability and skills development courses embedded in the programmes of study at the School of Business?

This objective sought to find out if the school of Business has skills development specific programmes. The respondents were in a way not clear about the availability of specific skills development programmes. For some of the respondents, almost all of the programmes are skills based. Three thematic areas were developed to help understand this objective. These themes were;

a. Availability of specific skills development programmes.

b. Ensuring that skills development is available to students.

Availability of specific skills development programmes: skills development programmes in the school of business. Three sub-themes are deduced from this main theme.

How skills are measured among students: This sub-theme directly relates to how the skills are measured among students. For some of the lecturers, measurement of skills among students depends largely on the objectives of the course. On the others, it is also deduced from their responses that the measurement of the skills among students are basically done through class presentations that are done by the students. The excerpts from the transcripts are presented below;

Lecturer 1 explained that:

> *Basically, if it is presentation, we look out for how you can make yourself clear in terms of articulation, it is very necessary. What you are presenting, I have to understand. And problem solving, if you are*

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giving a case study, you are required to identify the problems and come out with solutions. (Entrepreneurship Lecturer).

Lecturer 2 had this to say;

I do it through their presentations. I cannot measure a skill without it being put into practice. It is the practical things they do that enable us to measure their skills. So, I do measure it by their presentations, actions and assignments given to them (Auditing Lecturer).

Lecturer 3 said that:

developing of skill in students is done basically through presentation, assignments and examinations.

(Management Lecturer 1)

Lecturer 4 had this to say:

When a student is asked to do a presentation, we also ask several questions and sometimes, we are able to know whether you are able to communicate very well. In the quest to answer the questions, we are also able to measure your critical thinking skills. So, this is one of the ways we use to measure our students. (Business Communication Lecturer)

Lecturer 5 added that:

We mostly assess student through presentation, ability to complete tasks. Sometimes, you see students exhibit outstanding leadership and team leadership skills and that's how we measure the impact of those skills you are talking about. There is however no structured way of knowing whether a student has acquired these skills or not.

(Compensation Lecturer)

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Lecturer 6 also stated:

> *As for measuring skills, it not done in isolation. Then also, the true measure of skills is measured at the point of delivery. So, at our level, we use presentations, term papers etc. So, for instance as lecturers, our ability to progress is based on the number of publications you have. Every paper has a point. If two people publish one paper it has a different point" ... (Strategic Human Source Management Lecturer)*

Lecturer 7 said:

> *You see, skills are embedded in the course I teach. By the nature of our course outline, the only way to know that the student has actually adopted some skills is through presentation and exhibition of basic understanding of some concepts.* (Management Lecturer2).

Ensuring that skills development is available to students: this theme was on ensuring that skills development is available to students. Basically, some of the interviewees stated that, effort is made to ensure that all the students are engaged in the class as much as possible. Most interviewees were of the view that ensuring that skills development is available to students is difficult. These interesting responses are presented below;

Lecturer 1 shared that;

> *As I indicated earlier on, I make sure that I engage all the students as much as possible in class. So, the first day I enter the class, I ask them to write their names and place it on a sheet of paper in front of him or her. So that it will not be like the questions are directed to the whole class. But I mention the names of the students. So, at the end of*

the semester, definitely I would have gotten everybody engaged in something and then maybe develop one or two skills that the person may find it useful in future. It is one way of making that opportunity available to all of them. (Entrepreneur Lecturer)

Lecturer 2 had this view to share:

Really, ensuring it is difficult because sometimes you wish a particular student is given the chance to do better than what he/she is doing. Yet, it looks like it is amorous area, who are you going to speak to? Though you think this man, or this boy or this lady might be very good if given the chance, but your hands are tight.

(Auditing Lecturer).

Lecturer 3 opined that

I think the problem is the large number of students we have is what is becoming a problem. This is because if you are lecturing a class size of 450 and they are working in groups, it means you are working with 45 groups. So, ensuring is the problem and the problem is coming from the size of the class that we are having.

(Management Lecturer1)

Lecturer 4 also that:

The courses we teach has the aim of imparting and developing student's soft skills. So, over the years, I have used teaching approach which enable students to really use their minds to critically thing and solve problems. So, I normally use real-time case study to teach.

(Business Communication Lecturer)

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Lecturer 5 explained that:

> *I do my best to ensure students, willing students exhibit good soft*
>
> *skills which will be beneficial for the job market. Sometimes, the*
>
> *class size does not allow to test student one by one. But generally,*
>
> *these skills are*
>
> *embedded and incorporated into what I teach.*
>
> *(Compensation Lecturer)*

Lecturer 6 stated:

> *These skills are not things you can isolate and say you are teaching*
>
> *them separately. As I lecturer, I know the qualities I wish my*
>
> *students to have so I deliberately incorporate these in the course,*
>
> ask questions that massage these qualities…
>
> (Strategic Human Resource Management Lecturer)

Lecturer 7 added that:

> *When it comes to soft skills like critical thinking, you know it cannot*
>
> *be taught in school. The student will have to know and make a*
>
> *decision to use his mind extensively to be able to harness this soft*
>
> *skill. My role as a course handler is to ensure teach things that will*
>
> *require the students to use his or her mind. To me, these skills are*
>
> *not taught separately, is all embedded*. (Management
>
> Lecturer 2)

4.   **Research Question 3:** What is the impact of the employability and

skills development courses undertaken at the school of Business on students"

career?

The third objective discussed in the data collection stage was Impact of the skills development programmes on past student's career. My interaction with the interviewees showed that in some cases there have been positive impact of skills development programmes on their careers. They reported that although some positive impacts are being made, there is the need to improve more on the impacts being made. The third objective therefore was to know the impact from the past students" point of view. These are responses given by the three respondents.

In an interaction, the students were asked if they were able to work to the desired level after graduation, The students shared this;

Past Student 1 stated that;

> I think everything came into perspective after I went back to the work field. Me, coming into the MCOM programme from the career, everything now made sense to me. I could now apply most of the knowledge acquired from the programme. But I must say, it's not direct. It's not like you are being taught how to do interviews or shortlist candidates. So, I had to try and remember what my Human resource lecturer taught me and apply. But the course was impactful because it boosts my confidence and how I approach my career. (Past student accounting and
>
> finance Dept,)

Past student 2 indicated that;

> After graduation, my supervisor had to help me out. He took me through certain things even though we were taught. I was not able

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to outright link what and how I was taught to the demands of the

job I secured…

(Past Student, *Human Resource Management Dept)*

Past student 3 also added the following:

Yes, very much. You know I was working before I came to do

the course. Everything changed for me when I went back. I could

better do some tasks and effectively. I got to understand a lot of

concepts and my confidence became really high.

Summary

Research objective one sought to determine the nature of courses undertaken by the university of cape coast. Three thematic areas were explored. The results found out that skills development is a central part of the courses taught by the lecturers. Research objective two examined the kinds of employability and skills development courses embedded in the courses of study.

The objective number two sought to find out if the school of Business has skills development specific programmes. The respondents were in a way not clear about the availability of specific skills development programmes. For the respondents, all of the programmes taught are skills based and focuses on equipping the student with key skills like critical thinking, teamwork just to mention a few.

Research objective three determined the impact of the employability programmes on students" career. It was discovered that some positive impacts are made because of the course delivery modes. Students are able to cascade

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the knowledge acquired from the programmes undertaken when fully employed in the workplace. It was also deduced from the students that they were not able to make a quick translation of what they were thought in school to what was required of them when they started to work in an organisation. This assertion by the students support the employability debate which has gained prominence lately. Harvey (2000a) advocates the view that the primary role of higher education is to train students by enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities and to empower them as lifelong critical and reflective learners.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presented a summary of the purpose of this study, the chapter also looked at the research questions that underpinned the work and the methodology used. Areas for further research are also suggested in this final chapter of the study.

Summary of the Research Process

The main focus of the study was to Assessing the role of employability and skills development courses using the University of Cape Coast School of Business as a case through their various training programmes. Specifically, the study sought to determine the nature of courses undertaken by the University of Cape Coast, to identify the kinds of employability and skills development courses embedded in the programmes of study at the School of Business and lastly, to determine the impact of the employability programmes

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on students" career. In line with these stated objectives, research questions were formulated to guide the study.

The research design was the case study design. The study employed the qualitative approach to examine the various ways in which employability and skills development can be enhanced in University of Cape Coast school of Business through their various training programmes. The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique in selecting lecturers of the School of Business University of Cape Coast. The main instrument for data collection was a structured interview guide. The interview guide was divided into sections with each section focusing on one objective. Section „A" and „B" covered items on the academic profile of the respondents and also on the kinds of skills development courses undertaken by the University of Cape Coast. Section C covered items on measuring the nature of employable skills development programmes. Section D covered items on impact of the skills development programmes on past students" career. Data from the field were analysed systematically and grouped under major themes and sub-themes in line with the research questions.

Key Findings

This section presents the findings that emanated from the study. For the purpose of clarity, the key findings were presented according to the research questions formulated to guide the study.

Research question one

1.   What are the nature of courses undertaken by the University of Cape Coast School of Business.

The courses assigned to the lecturers were; entrepreneurship, new venture creation, small enterprise development, business development services for small enterprises, principles of accounting, international business, international marketing, international finance, intermediate accounting, reporting, auditing, information systems, project management, public administration, policy analysis, business communication, law and proceedings, industrial relations, industrial and organizational psychology, general psychology and human relations in Ghanaian organizations.

2.   What are the kinds of employability and skills development courses embedded in the programmes of study at the School of Business. Skills development is a central part of the courses taught by the lecturers. To make it simple, the relevance of the courses to skills development included; preparing students with the skills to analyse policies objectively and professionally, train the students to acquire much skills in human relations and how to communicate both vertically and horizontally and equip the students with the skills in knowing and understanding how emotions affect their communication. Skills such as; problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, investigative skills, team communication, presentation skills, time management skills and negotiation skills were incorporated into the courses that they teach. Skills measurement among students are done every day during lectures. This means that the skills are measured frequently through class assignment as well as group presentations. Time allocated for skills development is woefully inadequate.

Research question three

1. Although, some positive impacts are being made, there is the need improve more on the impacts being made.

2. Lack of mechanisms put in place to check up on the students makes it difficult to know the impact of their studies on their career.

Conclusions

On the nature of courses undertaken by the University of Cape Coast, that study concluded that the courses prepared the students adequately to be able to work effectively in the job market. This means that the nature of the courses undertaken by the University to a large extent taught student to analyse policies professionally, tolerate and relate well with people and also instilled in them the right skills needed for the job market.

Concerning how UCC measures the level of employability skills, it can be concluded that measurement of skills was largely done on the basis of the objectives of the various courses and the class presentations, being it oral or written.

Paying attention to the impact of the employability programmes on students" career, the research concluded that some positive impacts are being made but the past students were not able to immediately transfer the employability skills knowledge acquired in the classrooms to the job field. There were also no mechanisms in place to check up on the students and so it makes very difficult to assess the impact being made.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions that have been drawn, the following recommendations are made;

1.   Other colleges and schools in the University of Cape Coast should make effort to ensure that programmes and courses offered to students prepare them adequately for the job market. This will go a long way to bridge the gap between the classroom and the cooperate world to the barest minimum.

2.   The University of Cape Coast School of Business should put in place mechanisms to trace the effectiveness and the efficiency of their students in their respective places of work. When this is done it will help the Business school to review the courses in order to meet the growing demands of the twenty-first century job market.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. Since the study looked solely at the School of Business as a case study, other researchers can also use other departments or schools in the University.

2. Research can also be conducted in other tertiary institutions in other regions of the country.
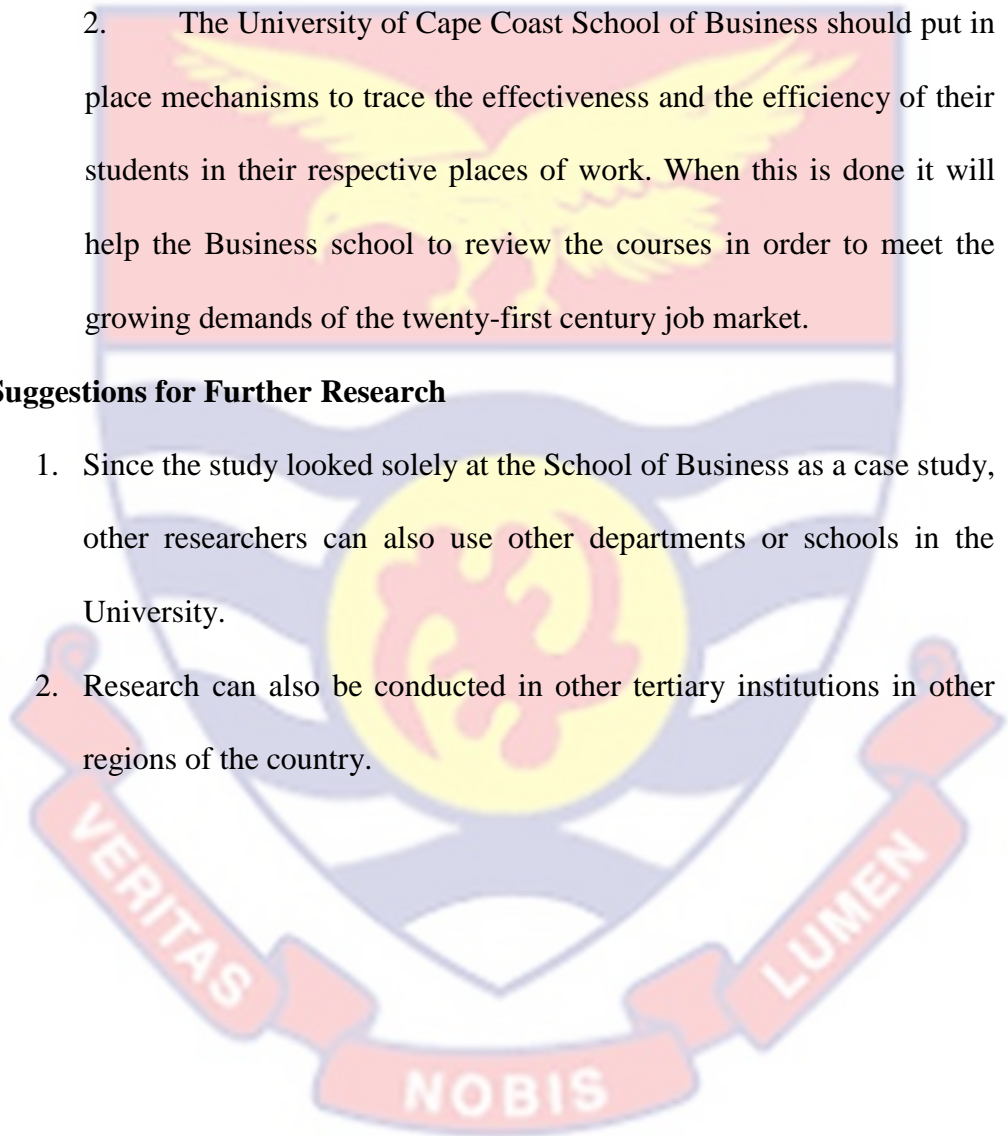
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LECTURERS

TOPIC: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF UCC AS A SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND SKILLS UTILIZATION INSTITUTION: THE CASE OF SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this interview guide is to gather data on assessing the role of UCC as a skills development and skills utilization institution using the School of Business as a case in point.

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Sex of respondents

2. What is your professional qualification?

3. What is your academic qualification?

4. How long have you worked after graduation?

THE NATURE OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT COURSES

UNDERTAKEN BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

5. What basic skills are most desired by your organization in training?

6. Which of the above skills was incorporated into your programmes study?

MEASURING EFFECT OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

7. How is employable skills measured by your employer?

8. How often is this done?

9. Do you think that the period of time the skills development programme is undertaken is sufficient?

EVALUATING THE KINDS OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AT THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

10. Do you think the school of business specifically has skills development programmes?

11. What are some of these courses?

12. How important is continuous learning as a tool for promoting skills development in your school?

13. How do you ensure that skills development are available to students?

IMPACT OF THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON THE STUDENTS

14. Were you able to work to the desired level after graduation?

15. When you were employed, what were some of the challenges you faced in relation to what your employer expected and what your programme of study offered.

CHALLENGES IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

16. What are some of the challenges affecting skills development?

MEASURES TO PROMOTE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

17. Is your organization promoting continuous learning?

18. What do you think should be done generally to improve skills development in institutions?

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

TOPIC: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF UCC AS A SKILLS

DEVELOPMENT AND SKILLS UTILIZATION INSTITUTION: THE

CASE OF SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

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THE NATURE OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT COURSES UNDERTAKEN BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

5. What basic skills are most desired by your organization?

6. Which of the above skills was incorporated into your programme study?

MEASURING EFFECT OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

7. How is employable skills measured by your employer?

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8. How often is this done?

9. Do you think that the period of time the skills development programme is undertaken is sufficient? Explain.

EVALUATING THE KINDS OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AT THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

10. Do you think the school of business specifically has skills development programmes?

11. What are some of these courses?

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