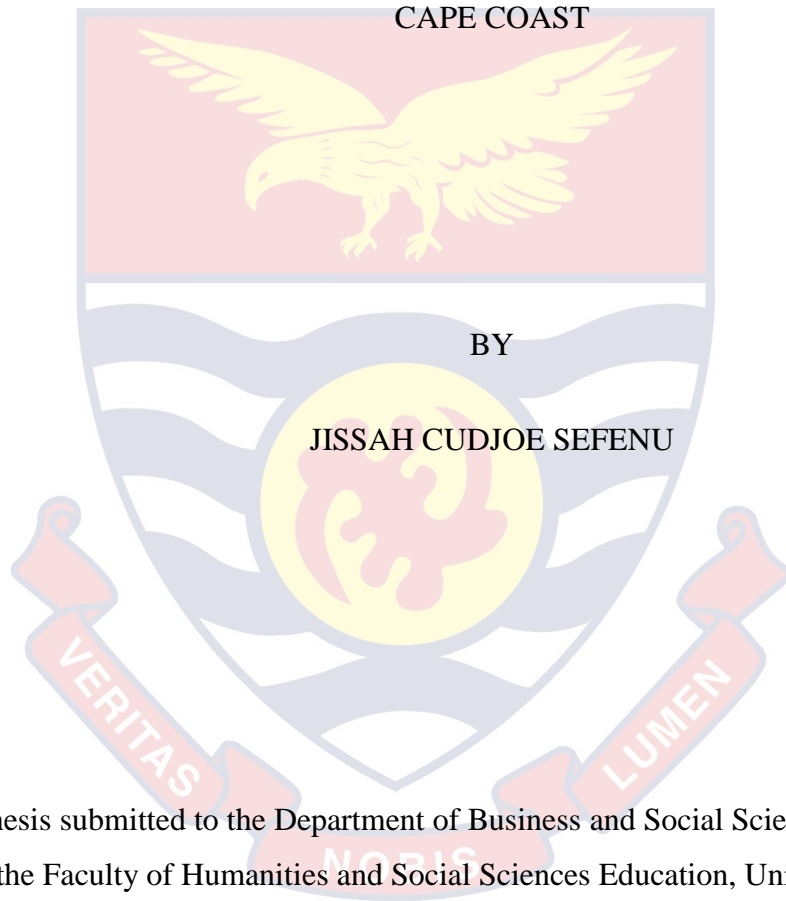


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

ASSESSMENT OF EMPLOYABLE SKILLS OF MANAGEMENT  
STUDENTS: PERCEPTIONS OF SUPERVISORS, EMPLOYEES AND  
MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST,  
CAPE COAST



This thesis submitted to the Department of Business and Social Sciences Education of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Education, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Management Education

JUNE 2021

## 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: Jissah Cudjoe Sefenu

### 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: Dr. Edward Nii Amar Amarteifio

## ABSTRACT

Graduate employability has become a rising concern among stakeholders. The study assessed final year management students' level of employable skills in University of Cape Coast, Ghana, to determine whether they were able to acquire the required employable skills by the end of their study. The study adopted a quantitative approach to research and descriptive survey research design to find out the perceptions of supervisors and employees regarding the employable skills that are important for management graduates and thereafter measured the level of importance the students attached to those employable skills, the rate at which they perceived those skills to be integrated in their curriculum, their self-perceived level of possession of those employable skills and the teaching methods that were adopted by their lecturers. Proportionate stratified sampling technique was adopted. In all, 64 supervisors, 64 employees and 89 final year management students responded to the survey. Data were collected using questionnaires on a 5-point Likert scale. Mean, standard deviation and Mann- U test were used to analyse the data. The study found that both supervisors and employees attached a high level of importance to the employable skills even though there was a statistically significant difference in perceptions between the supervisors and students. The study also found that the students' level of possession of those skills as well as the rate at which a number of effective teaching methods were applied were high. The study concluded that the management students' level of employable skills was high. Stronger partnerships between academia and industry geared towards curriculum development to further enhance students' employability was recommended.

KEY WORDS

Perception

Employable skills

Management studies



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Edward Nii Amar Amarteifio of the School of Business for his professional guidance to me throughout this research. I am deeply grateful.

I also wish to thank my family and friends for their support and guidance throughout my life and especially throughout this study. I equally extend my appreciation to the respondents for their time and objective responses.



DEDICATION

To my family



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
KEY WORDS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	7
Purpose of the Study	9
Research Objectives	9
Research Questions	10
Research Hypotheses	10
Significance of the Study	11
Delimitations	12

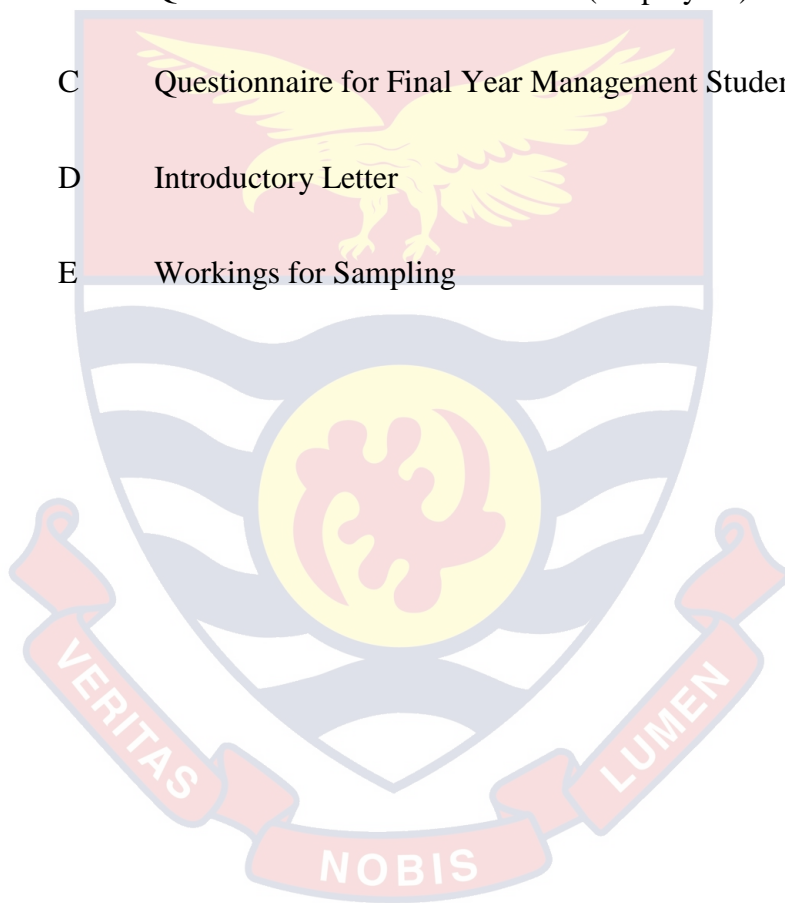
	page
Limitation	12
Organization of the Study	12
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Introduction	14
Theoretical Review	14
Human Capital Theory	14
The Consensus Theory	16
Experiential Learning Theory	18
Conceptual Review:	21
Perception	21
Perceptions on Employability	22
Perceptions on Employable skills	26
Perceptions on Management Studies	36
Perceptions on Higher Education Institutions	43
Empirical Review	46
Chapter Summary	60
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS	62



	page
Introduction	62
Research Philosophy	62
Research Approach	63
Research Design	65
Profile of the Study Institution	67
Population	68
Sampling and Sampling Procedure	70
Data Collection Instrument	71
Test for Validity and Reliability	73
Data Collection Procedures	74
Data Processing and Analysis	75
Ethical Consideration	78
Chapter summary	78
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>79</b>
Introduction	79
Overview of the Study	79
Supervisors' Perception of the Employable Skills	80

	page
Employees' Perception of the Employable Skills	82
Differences in Perceptions of Supervisors and Employees	87
Demography of Management Students	89
Students' Perception of the Importance of the Employable Skills	92
Differences in Perceptions of Supervisors and Students	94
Students' Perceptions of Integration of Skills in Curriculum	96
Students' Perception of Level of Possession of Employable Skills	99
Students' Perception of Teaching Strategies	105
Chapter summary	108
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECEOMMENDATIONS</b>	111
Introduction	111
Summary of the Study	111
Key Findings	113
Conclusions	114
Recommendations	115
Suggestions for Further Research	116

	page
REFERENCES	117
APPENDICES	138
A    Questionnaire for Heads of Department (Supervisors)	139
B    Questionnaire for Administrators (Employees)	141
C    Questionnaire for Final Year Management Students	143
D    Introductory Letter	147
E    Workings for Sampling	148



LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1 Population Size	70
2 Sample Size Distribution	71
3 Reliability Co-efficient for Each of the Sub-scales on the Questionnaire	74
4 Supervisors' perception of the importance of employable skills	80
5 Employees' perception of the importance of employable skills	83
6 Normality Test for supervisors' and employees' perception of the importance of employable skills	88
7 Differences Between Supervisors' and Employees' Perception on the Importance of Employable Skills	88
8 Characteristics of Management Students	90
9 Students' perception of the importance of employable skills	92
10 Normality Test for supervisors' and students' perception of the importance of employable skills	94
11 Differences Between Supervisors' and Students' Perception on the Importance of Employable Skills.	95
12 Students' perception of the extent of integration of the employable skills throughout the business curriculum	96
13 Students' self-perceived level of possession of employable skills	99
14 Teaching strategies applied to integrate employable skills across the curriculum	106

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The development of various dynamics including information technology, that has occurred within the world of business has necessitated changes in the nature and number of available jobs. These changes have shifted the demand in the required skills set needed to operate in the world of business. Employers have required business graduates to possess competencies such as skills relating to problem solving, communication and ICT. These requirements have placed an obligation on business schools to equip students with the requisite skills, knowledge and abilities desired by employers.

Several studies have been conducted in various geographical jurisdiction relating to management graduates' employability and whereas some studies have indicated that management students are able to acquire the needed employable skills by the end of their study, other studies have presented a contrary view. However, in Ghana, little research has been conducted in this regard and it appears that no such study has been conducted among the management students in the University of Cape Coast. The focus of this study therefore was to find out whether the management students in School of Business in University of Cape Coast were able to acquire relevant employable skills by the end of their study.

#### **Background to the Study**

The rapid rate of globalization coupled with the rise in digital technologies as well as the emergence of challenges in the world economies are few traits that define the world we live in today. An attempt to describe the rapid transition of

human society into the present world will herein be termed globalization. Globalization indicates the treatment of the world or a region of it as a common or single platform to conduct transactions of all nature. These rapid changes have caused a new dimension in the skills set desired by employers. Thus, employers now expect employees as well as graduates to possess and exhibit key competencies such as leadership, communication, team work, problem solving and technological skills (Reddy, 2019; Nesaratnam, Karan & Von, 2018; Abas & Imam, 2016; Ekpoh, 2015).

As national boundaries get blurred as a result of the swiftness that comes with the transfer of information, knowledge has become a powerful resource by which organizations conduct their businesses. This places a great responsibility on education institutions, as a source of knowledge, to meet the challenges presented by this new dimension. The consensus theorists have it that higher education institutions bear the responsibility of integrating universal competencies in their curriculum so as to turn out graduates who meet the demands of the society (Williams, Hesketh & Brown, 2003). According to Reddy (2019), an integral part of good education is ensuring that students are employable after they graduate and is therefore one major performance indicator of education institutions. This assertion supports the human capital theory which argue that education is a form of investment and that the higher an individual climbs the education ladder, the more productive that individual becomes. This should result in higher chances of the individual getting employed after graduation (Schultz, 1961). Reddy also indicated that there are certain factors such as career development activities, industrial

training and extra-curricular activities that influence graduates' acquisition of employable skills. These factors, as well as gender, were also earlier indicated by Jovina, Ab Rahim and Shamsiah (2014) as indicators that influence the employability of students.

According to Lisá, Hannelová and Newman (2019) who conducted a study among Slovak employers, the latter expressed the lack of appropriate skills by graduates to be a major hindrance to graduate employability. The role of education in higher institutions in equipping graduates with employable skills is therefore getting attention. There appears to be doubts in the minds of many about how well business education is able to prepare graduates to acquire employable skills. It is regularly propagated that the structures of education and training serve as the vehicle for initiating and realizing changes. Therefore, these structures ought to be modified so as to drive an appreciable conversion to an economic system and society that are knowledge-based (Nijhof, 2005). Higher education institutions ought to put certain factors in place to enhance students' acquisition of employable skills. Some of these factors include industrial training, extra-curricular activities, self-concept and career development activities (Reddy, 2019; Jovina, et al., 2014) as well as appropriate teaching methods as propagated by experiential learning theorists (Dewey 1897; Kolb, 1970) who assert that the teaching and learning of business education requires certain teaching methods such as discussion, role playing and simulation rather than the traditional lecture methods which is often used in the teaching of management. As schooling and training systems are recognized as the key factors to adjust to these changes in the business world, the

query now is: Is business education getting enough successful and inspiring managers ready to cope with these challenges?

A number of employers are interested in recruiting graduates who possess the attribute of being proactive, can employ greater degree abilities such as the ability to analyse, criticize and to engage in multi layered communication to promote revolutionary teamwork that results in positive change in their organization. Regrettably, a wide range of graduates from business schools end up in assorted work areas and begin to stare at the lacking relationship between their education and expectations at work. These inclinations have been highlighted in literature as inability to communicate appropriately, incapacity to work in groups, inability to apply principles to situations in the real world and misunderstanding of the necessities of employers (Subramanian, 2017). Studies have indicated that graduates and employers perceive differently the quality of skills needed for graduate employability (Fulcher, 2012; Low, Botes, Dela Rue & Allen, 2016; Ju, Zhang, & Pacha, 2012; Muyako & Seedwell, 2015; Naveed, Jabeen & Ullah, 2014)

The notion and meaning of employability thus have, over a span of time, been mentioned due to the increasing interest in enhancing employability of graduates. Graduate employability has therefore sparked a growing interest over the last decade. Several researchers have developed targeted and specific competencies and traits expedient to advance the employability of graduates. Some of these traits and competencies have been referred to in different ways such as core skills, key skills, transferable skills, essential skills and universal capabilities.



In earlier years of 1998, The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) asserted that to view employability solely as an issue pertaining to a single individual will cause one to misplace the essential elements of the concept. This is because employability is rather understood better when viewed as a social construct. As such, NIACE advances the argument that employability is a duty that ought to be shared equally among:

- i. people who should be responsible for accepting the penalties of preferences they make;
- ii. organisations which, in using a group of workers in providing services to customers, develop unique traits and talents as well as shaping behaviors of the workers. (In most cases what determines “employability” is conceptualized by employers).

Employers are tasked with a specific imperative to advance the employability skills of their team of workers - for commercial enterprise motive.

- iii. public educational and governmental institutions (schools, colleges, universities, local and national authorities) who are charged with a responsibility to safeguard the employability of all citizens.

NIACE brought to bear the nature of relativism of the notion of employability and brought attention to the fact that specific traits and values may additionally be distinctly contextual such as, what appears to be terrific values when it comes to dealing in healthcare may not be so in foreign exchange.

The indications in literature suggest that employers desire graduates who are versatile and who can develop and utilize abilities and skills to transform the organization and engage in innovative ways of working in a team. Employers also place value on graduates who can display critical thinking (reflection) as this is the vehicle that drives innovation and causes change (Harvey, Moon & Geall, 1997; Little 2001 in Lees 2002). This indicates that even before recent times, there has been an outcry about the dilution in the quality and capability of business schools to equip students with employable skills needed in business industry. The employable skills that are demanded by the job market are poorly developed and taught in Ghana's tertiary universities (NCTVET, 2006). Wongnaa and Boachie (2018) also asserted that the poor linkage between education and industry has caused increasing graduate unemployment in Ghana especially among business students.

Among the various disciplines in business education, the teaching and learning of management is one that has received a lot of criticisms regarding graduate employability. According to Mintzberg (2003), the problem that goes with management education is that it is just management schooling, and does not give a holistic apprehension and view of management as a function. He further argued that management activities require a need to harmonize a good deal of craft with an adequate level of art and science and that management education overemphasizes the science and does not create a balance between management theories and practice. Akpor-Robaro (2018), also argued that some management theories do not work, particularly in the African society. He further argued that some management

theories are alien to African society and are not appropriate to the context of Africa. These assertions imply that the study of management in business schools is likely not to equip the students with the necessary skills needed for the job market (Boateng & Ofori-Sarpong, 2002).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over the past decade, the world of business has experienced changes in the operation of its activities. These changes have come as a result of increasing development in technology and social relationships and have caused a shift in the nature of available jobs. This shift has necessitated employers to review the skills set expected of business graduates in order to be effective and efficient at the workplace. The teaching and learning of management, which is a distinct academic discipline within business education is one that has received a lot criticisms regarding how well it is able to equip management students with desired employable skills (Mintzberg, 2003; Geel, 2015; Akpor-Rabaro, 2018). However, there are several other studies that have presented a contrary indication that business students, including management students, are able to acquire relevant employable skills by the end of their study (Abas & Imam, 2016; Wongnaa & Boachie, 2018; Reddy, 2019). It therefore appears that there are opposing views regarding how well the study of management is able to equip students with relevant employable skills.

Studies have also indicated that employers, employees and students often have different perceptions regarding the quality of skills needed for graduate employability (Muyako & Seedwell, 2015; Damoah, Peprah & Brefo, 2021).

According to Baah-Boateng and Twum (2020), managers of some surveyed firms in Ghana have expressed dissatisfaction towards graduates with background of humanities and business administration from various tertiary institutions in Ghana recruited for administrative task, stating that some of these graduates are not able to exhibit simple communication skills. The managers further claimed that inappropriate teaching methods as well as insufficient exposure may be the causes for poor quality of education and skills training. The call for stronger linkages between business education in higher institutions and industry in Ghana to enhance graduate employability (Damoah, Peprah & Obrefo, 2021; Wongnaa & Boachie, 2018) has given rise to the need to assess how well management studies prepares students in Ghana for the job market.

Among the tertiary institutions in Ghana, University of Cape Coast (UCC) is the oldest traditional university with management as a distinct academic programme with a distinct department and teaching faculty designed to equip students to provide administrative support to higher level management. Although the claim by the managers in Ghana as indicated by Baah-Boateng and Twum (2020) may not relate solely to management students from UCC, it appears that no research has actually been done regarding the study of management in UCC and its ability to equip students with employable skills. Therefore, the question as to whether management students in UCC are able to acquire the needed employable skills by the end of their studies has become a debate on the minds of many.

### **Purpose of the Study.**

In attempting to assess the employability of management students in University of Cape Coast, this study sought to find out supervisors' employees' and students' perceptions of employable skills they expect management graduates to possess and to determine whether the management students were able to acquire those employable skills by the end of their study.

### **Research Objectives**

The study therefore focused on the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the employable skills that supervisors perceive to be important for the success of administrators in the workplace.
2. To determine the employable skills that employees perceive to be important for the success of administrators in the workplace.
3. To find out whether there are differences in the perceptions of supervisors and employees regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators in the workplace.
4. To find out whether there are differences in the perceptions of supervisors and students regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators in the workplace.
5. To measure students' self-perceived level of employable skills needed for the success of administrators in the workplace.
6. To identify the teaching strategies that students perceive are applied by lecturers to enhance the acquisition of employable skills needed for the success of administrators in the workplace.

## Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following specific questions:

1. What employable skills do supervisors perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace?
2. What employable skills do employees perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace?
3. What is the students' self-perceived level of employable skills needed for the success of administrators at the workplace?
4. What teaching strategies do students perceive are applied by lecturers to enhance the acquisition of the employable skills needed for the success of administrators at the workplace?

The study also sought to test the following research hypotheses:

## Research Hypotheses

### Hypothesis 1

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and employees regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and employees regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.

## Hypothesis 2

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and students regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and students regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.

### **Significance of the Study.**

The contents of this study will be significant in the following ways:

The study will through publication bring to bear employers' perception of the employable skills students should possess and students' perceived level of those employable skills. With these findings, factors that lead to the grey area between education and practice and more importantly the competency gap in the field of management studies will add to the existing knowledge of how management studies ought to reflect the real world of business practice. Thus, business educationists will be able to draw on these findings to reform the content of business curriculum, improve skills of content delivery and create a more effective blend between academia and industry.

Management students will be more fully aware of the employable skills expected of them by employers and acknowledge their self-perceived level of those employable skills. Industries are also faced with management issues every now and then as they encounter new governments and technologies coupled with changes in

social trends. This study will provide employers the opportunity to contribute to academic reform in relation to employable skills.

### **Delimitations**

Though this study focused on employers, employees and management students in relation to business education and business practice in general, the study was delimited to the Heads of Department, Administrators and Management Students of School of Business, all in the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. The study was also delimited to the generic employable skills expected of management students which are needful in the real world of work.

### **Limitation**

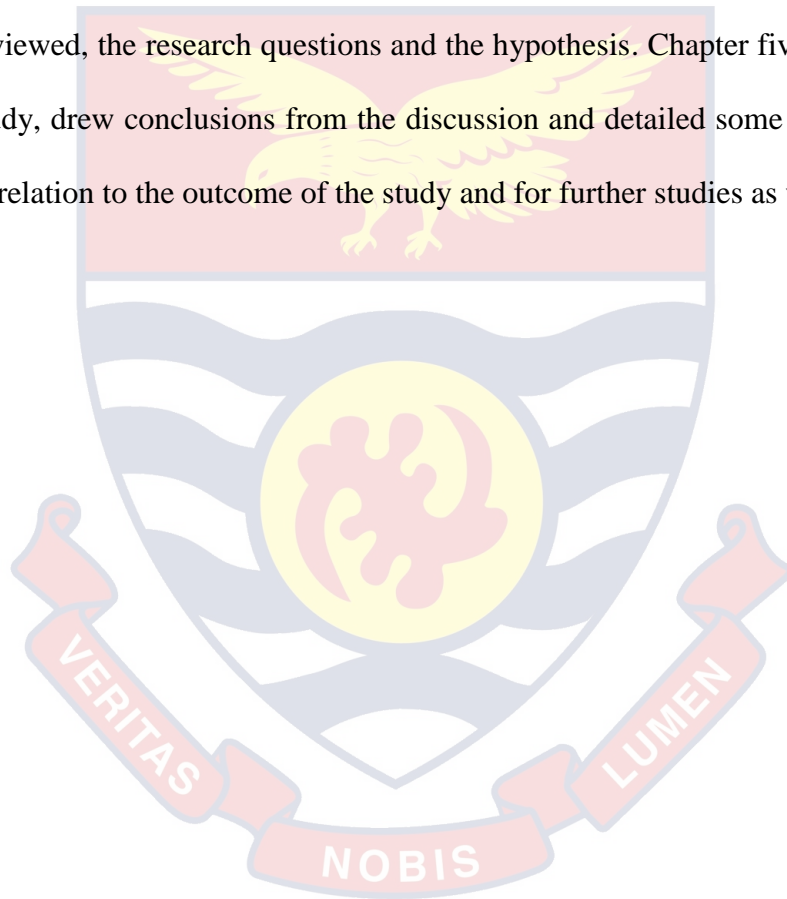
The use of survey design relies on self-reported data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). This means that the students provided data based on their personal belief of the level of their employability skills. The risk is that the answers provided may be socially acceptable responses and therefore may not exactly reflect their true level of employability skills. However, it was expected that the respondents provide objective responses especially because of the researcher's appeal for objectivity in responses.

### **Organization of the Study**

This work was organized into chapters ranging from one to five. Chapter one presented the work under study and entails the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the research objectives, significance of the study to academia and industry as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study. Chapter two presented a review of related literature that supports the



subject under study and reviewed various facets of the study such as the concept of employability, the development of management studies as an academic discipline and employable skills. Chapter three discussed the research methods: research design, study area, sampling procedure, data collection instrument, reliability and validity of the instruments and data processing and analysis. Chapter four introduced the results of the research and discussed it in relation to the literature reviewed, the research questions and the hypothesis. Chapter five summarized the study, drew conclusions from the discussion and detailed some recommendations in relation to the outcome of the study and for further studies as well.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses some related works that are relevant to this research. The chapter discusses the theoretical bases for the study and gives information on the definitions and concepts of terms such as perception, employability, employable skills expected of management graduates and the role of higher education institutions in employability with regards to management students. It also discusses related empirical studies that have been conducted.

#### Theoretical Review

The theories that were reviewed in relation to this study were: the human capital theory, the consensus theory and the experiential learning theory. The human capital theory argues that the productivity of an individual is increased by the individual's level of education which eventually enhances job performance. The consensus theory examines the role of higher education institutions (HEI) in equipping students with employable skills whereas the experiential learning theory identifies the teaching strategies which ought to be adopted by HEIs to enhance students' acquisition of employable skills. These theories were reviewed to aid in filling the research gap.

#### The Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory as propounded by Schultz (1961) and Becker (2009) argues that an individual's productivity is increased by the individual's level of education and this contributes to job performance subsequently. Therefore, the

end result of education is to equip its products with skills, knowledge and abilities that are marketable and are relevant to the performance of a job function. The implication thus is, there are high chances of success for people who are highly educated in the job market in terms of opportunities and income. It is therefore expected that as students go through education at the higher level, they ought to be able to acquire and possess the needed attributes that will assist them with increased chances of employability and productivity.

The human capital theory presents the argument that industry serves as the major consumer of graduates that higher education produces. Thus, in order for higher education to maintain its relevance, they ought to adjust their contents, teaching strategies and approaches to meet the dynamic demands of employers (Wessels & Jacobs, 2010). There have been requests by employers for well-groomed graduates who have relevant and adequate knowledge of the labour market and practices in business. To this end, it has been advocated that products of higher education should exhibit skills that are transferrable such as ability to communicate clearly, solve problems and relate well with others and not just highly specialised in a narrow academic field of study (Cummings, 2010).

The relationship between level of education and labour market opportunities has often been justified by the human capital theory. This theory in relation to the employability of final year management students, intimates that the final year management students ought to have the propensity to provide higher productivity than those without higher education in management and therefore should be readily consumed by industries once they graduate. Whereas that ought

to the case universally, several studies have postulated that management students are not able to acquire the necessary skills by the end of their study. These assertions can create doubts about the productivity of management graduates.

Although the argument by human capital theorists has become popular, the theory has received criticisms too. Its hypothesis assumes a perfect situation in which employers possess the ability to objectively and rationally evaluate the abilities of employees as well as job seekers but there are several uncertainties such as imperfect knowledge about the characteristics of an individual and lack of certainty regarding the quality of one's education that surround situations in labour markets (Levhari & Weiss, 1974).

### **Consensus Theory**

In the context of graduate employability, the theory that supports the relationship among labour market, employment and universities has been attributed to consensus theory which dates as far back as the nineteenth century (Williams, Hesketh & Brown, 2003). Consensus Theory researchers argue that the integration of universal competencies in the curriculum of universities will promote the employability of graduates and assist them in future prospects in the corporate world (Selvadurai, Choy & Maros, 2012). The theory places focus on the norms and beliefs of culture and society similar to organisations in the society (Williams et al., 2003). The argument of this theory is that the improvement of established abilities at institutions of higher learning will promote graduates' employability and help them function effectively on the job.

Accordingly, universities need to introduce approaches targeted at developing standard capabilities into the curricula of universities to enhance employability (Fallows & Steven, 2000). The infusion of universal skills into curricula ought to be a prerogative to universities because knowledge of educational subjects alone is deemed not adequate in the modern economic environment. As such it is necessary that higher education institutions have a relook at their curricula and infuse usual competencies and exclusive capability (Selvadurai et al., 2012).

A further argument is that consensus theory does not hold universities responsible for merely including employable skills in the curricula but also for introducing strategic pedagogical techniques to enhance the development of those skills among students (Selvadurai et al., 2012). Pedagogical strategies most probably appropriate for developing widespread skills may include learning that is situated, problem based or one that involves active discovery. Learning that is situated involves aiding students to develop an active process of learning and not being just passive recipients of knowledge whereas learning that is problem based entails helping students acquire knowledge from practical experiences as well as generating solutions to challenging problems that are likely to occur. The active discovery learning enables students to actively look into problems autonomously and achieve new perception into complex situations (Onyon, 2012).

Although the consensus theory holds treasured insights concerning the improvement of employable skills, it has received its own measure of criticism. A major criticism against the theory is that it fails to acknowledge the fact that some persons are likely to enhance their employable abilities at the expense of others

(Williams et al., 2003). The theory also presents employability as a problem that is only skills-based and ought to be resolved only by universities and graduates in accordance to the desires of employers without acknowledging other factors such as gender, social status and inequalities that are also variables in the context of employability (Williams et al., 2003).

### **Experiential Learning Theory**

There have been immense efforts toward improving higher education in recent times. This has led to a focus on improving the process of learning in the field of education through research application from what has been called “the new science of learning” (Branford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Experiential learning theory is based on the work of some renowned scholars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These scholars emphasized the pivotal role of experience in the theories regarding human learning and development. Some of these scholars were John Dewey, Kurt Lewin and William James.

Experiential learning has been one of the important aspects upon which this research is centered on. However, there have been misconceptions about it. Often times it has been misunderstood as a set of techniques used to provide learners with experiences they can learn from. Others have described the term as a learning technique that is mind-less recording of experience. Experiential learning however is a philosophy of education based on what Dewey (1938) referred to as “theory of experience”. The strategies involved in experiential learning include case based analyses, role playing and internships. These are some methods of teaching that have been advocated for the teaching of business programmes (Henry, Hill &

Leitch, 2005). Dewey argued that a sound theory of experience is needed to guide the new experiential approach to education.

The theory of experiential learning was built on six propositions held in common by the scholars:

1. Learning is not just an outcome but also a process and therefore to improve the effectiveness of learning in institutions of higher learning, there need to be an emphasis on engaging students in a process that best facilitates learning. This process should include the opportunity to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the learning effort (Dewey 1897).
2. All learning is relearning. To better facilitate learning, there should be a process that discovers the beliefs and ideas of students regarding a particular topic. This enables the students accept new ideas that they can easily imbibe and on which they can be examined.
3. The process of learning involves the ability to mentally resolve opposing ideas. The process of learning is more effectively driven through differences and disagreements.
4. The process of learning is geared towards developing a person holistically and not just in terms of cognition. Its goal is to integrate the total functioning of a person.
5. Learning emanates from the synergy between a person and the environment. The interaction between a person and his/her environment creates opportunity for personalized learning.

6. Knowledge is created through learning. Unlike the current trend of passing on preexisting ideas to learners, learning ought to provide opportunity for the creation of social knowledge and then integrated personally into the learner's knowledge.

According to Kolb and Kolb (2009), the manner in which the process of education is conducted in management schools, as they observed, revealed some insight into the learning nature in some learning regions. The scientific basis for which the curriculum of management was developed in 1959 by an influential Carnegie Foundation report was due to the need to improve the intellectual respectability of management studies. This was done by underpinning it in three scientific disciplines: economics, mathematics, and behavioral science. However, management studies or education is primarily discursive, with each topic covered in a linear sequence with little recursive repetition. Management education focuses on telling and tends to emphasize theory. Again, according to Kolb and Kolb (2009), learning hours in management classes are often spent on lecture method where students only become passive participants in the classroom. Also, management education is often organized into large classes and does not pay attention to individual students.

Most students arrive at institutions of higher education preconditioned by experiences they had in previous education as passive recipients of what they were taught. Re-conditioning the minds of students to take maximum charge of their learning can greatly facilitate their opportunity to learn through experience. By developing their effectiveness as learners, students can be empowered to take



responsibility for their own learning by understanding how they learn best and the skills necessary to learn in regions that are uncomfortable for them (Keeton, Sheckley, & Griggs, 2002).

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Perception**

The concept of perception as applied in the disciplines of social sciences has been defined in a number of ways since the first time it was used. From the perspective of a lay man, the understanding of perception could be seen in the light of being aware of the environment one finds him/herself through physical sensation. The study of literature has however highlighted the fact that the definitions and theories of perception have their strongholds in the fields of Philosophy and Psychology and are not without their theoretical debates (Lewis, 1999). According to Qiong (2017), in philosophy, perception is the process of gaining awareness. In this study, the concept of perception will herein be defined as one's awareness of the employable skills that are important for the success of administrators at the work place and their level of possession of those employable skills.

Within the context of graduate employability, prior studies have indicated an 'expectation gap' which has come about due to various stakeholders including employers, employees, students and education institutions having different perceptions regarding employability and the skills set that are important for a given job requirement (Low, Botes, Dela Rue & Allen, 2016). Damoah, Peprah and Brefo (2021) intimated that in Ghana, employers and education institutions still have

differences in perceptions on graduate employable skills. Employability has been defined in various ways by various researchers and as such stakeholders seem to define the term based on how they perceive the concept. According to Lisa, Henelova, and Newman (2019), there is no uniform theory of employability. The researchers intimated that the reasons for this are complexity, situational factors, the changing labor market, graduates' individual interest and attitude, as well as their professional focus. It can also be related to diverse and complementary roles played by experts in this field of research, such as education, career, management and psychology experts. The various perceptions held by stakeholders in matters of employability has therefore led to varying skills set perceived to be important for various business activities. Therefore, stakeholders' perception on employability, employable skills and education ought to be discussed.

### **Perceptions on Employability**

Over the years, many organizational bodies as well as researchers have defined the term employability and assisted in understanding the concept of it. Over a decade ago, Hillage and Pollard (1998) defined employability as the capability of a person to gain and remain in employment. This definition suggests that employability does not end at the entry point but lives on through the time one remains in employment. To add to this definition, Hawkins (1999), stated that employability is the ability to make future plans and to develop the skills and knowledge needed to enhance those plans. Therefore, employability is not an issue relating to only the present but transcends through the future and as such an individual ought to prepare today for employment opportunities tomorrow.

Robinson (2000) also defined employability as a fundamental set of skills that are expedient for gaining, maintaining and performing well on a job.

Building on the definition by Robinson (2000) came one by Rothwell and Arnold (2007) that employability is the ability to get the job one desires or to keep the job one has. Analyzing this definition may mean that although an individual may not acquire a desired job, the ability to gain an undesired job and remain employed can also be considered as employability. Therefore, Berntson (2008) stated that the potential a person has about his or her chances of getting a new, similar or a well advanced job is referred to as employability.

Yorke (2006) elaborated on the term employability by stating that it is a set of skills, understandings and potential traits that enable a graduate stand the chance of gaining employment and achieving success in their chosen occupation with some benefits accruing to themselves, employers and other stakeholders. A similar elaboration was given by the Confederation of British Industry (2009) that employability is a set of attributes, skills and knowledge that ought to be imbibed by all participants in the labour market so as to ensure their effectiveness in their place of work and to contribute some benefit to themselves, their employers and the economy as a whole.

Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), viewed employability from the perspective of fresh graduates and stated that it is the ability of an individual to get a job according to his or her educational status. This definition, although seems simplistic, suggests however that an individual's employment should match his or her educational standard before it can be considered as employability. Although

this may be criticized by many, the relationship between employability and education is drawn from this argument. Many individuals graduate from school and expect to gain employment in their field of study and of their educational level. Therefore, to draw the relationship between employment and educational standard can indeed be said to be true in the case of fresh graduates.

Bennett (2016) defined employability in similar context to that of Hillage and Pollard (1998) referring to the concept as the ability to gain and keep employment. Therefore, a critical look at the totality of these definitions indicate that the concept of employability can be narrowed to one's ability to:

- i. gain an employment;
- ii. keep an employment;
- iii. obtain a new employment and;
- iv. the benefits that accrue to oneself, the community or to the economy.

In recent times however, the concept of employability has taken a more dynamic toll. Some researchers have propagated that the concept of employability should be realigned to meet the needs of today's dynamic business world. According to McIlveen (2018), an individual's perception of and interaction with the opportunities available in their economic environment have a reflection on their employability. Therefore, employability refers to the ability of an individual to deploy consciously career adaptability to actively secure work in which they feel a sense of reward for their attributes, skills and knowledge that really are in demand in a given environment. McIlveen explained that the opportunities that exist in the

economic environment contribute to the employability of individuals of that environment.

As seen already, employability in earlier days was perceived as the ability to gain and maintain an employment. However, it needed to be understood that the conditions of the economic environment either create or stifle the ability to gain and maintain employment in the first place and therefore to define employability without recourse to the economic environment may not give a clear indication of how employability needs to be understood. Thus, McIlveen (2018) stood on the viewpoint that an individual's employability depends on how that individual perceives and interacts with the opportunities in the economic environment. For example, in an economic environment, there may be five educated and very adaptable persons with similar good goals and high enthusiasm towards work. However, if the environment creates room for only one job, the remaining four are bound to be disappointed and will not fit into the earlier versions of employability.

According to Smith, Bell, Bennett, and McAlpine (2018), employability is not just an outcome, but is also a process, with principles of career development enhancing the ability of an individual to fully utilize their skills perpetually for both private and public good. In addressing the challenges that come with productivity, the views of utilitarianism uphold the facilitation of employability by higher education as key. Making sure that workers who feel rewarded intrinsically are placed in or with organizations where they are more productive and settled is the challenge.

The earlier perceptions of employability coupled with emerging definitions of the concept indicate that employability from the perspective of fresh graduates is the ability of an individual to make future plans that will enable that individual gain and maintain employment needed in an economic environment for the benefit of oneself, the society and the economy. This definition incorporates the idea of a collaborated effort on the part of both the individual and social organizations in an economic environment towards employability.

### **Perceptions on Employable skills**

Employable skills are attributes, capabilities and traits that make an individual capable of gaining and maintaining employment. Employable competencies are not always job specific, but can also be competencies which cut throughout all industries and throughout all jobs from entry stage to chief executive officer. The study focused on generic employable skills expected of management graduates in order to provide administrative support to higher level management. A number of graduates seem to leave universities without acquiring the needed and adequate skills that are pivotal for entering the world of work. According to Segbenya and Baafi-Frimpong (2021), skills mismatch exists between the acquired skills of tertiary graduates and skills required by employers in Ghana. Employability skills are described as competencies required not solely to achieve employment, but also to progress within an organization so as to reap one's potential and make a contribution successfully to enterprise strategic directions (DEST 2002).

Rigby and Sanchis (2006) conceptualized skill as generally the ability of an individual to convert knowledge into an action. This definition goes a long way to contribute to creating a fair idea of what a skill is in the minds of individuals. On a daily basis, actions are required to get work done in various settings of life such as organizations. With predetermined goals and standards, employees are required to convert resources - physical, financial and non-financial – to meet desired results. Such transformation process requires series of actions which ought to be taken in some prescribed manner to achieve the purpose for which they are taken. Therefore, to define a skill to be just the ability of an individual to translate knowledge into an action will be adequate but insufficient. It is to say that any action that is taken as a result of translating knowledge is acceptable. If so, then, there seems to be no need to set standards.

However, the process of goal setting and the evaluation of performance demands that actions taken be in consonance with what is expected. With that being said, it seems that the adequacy of the aforementioned definition of what a skill is by Rigby and Sanchis (2006) will be added upon to some level of sufficiency if it is defined as the ability of an individual to transform requisite knowledge into a desirable action. The fundamental claim of the theory of skill acquisition by Dekeyser (2007) implies that to learn various skills shows a remarkable similarity in development from a start-off representation of knowledge through initial changes in behavior to a more fluent and effortless skilled behavior and that this set of phenomenon can be accounted for by a set of basic principles which are common to the acquisition of all skills. Therefore, as propounded by Speelman (2005), the

process of acquiring skills can be seen as a specific form of learning. Learning, by Speelman, was defined as information about some cognitive or environmental event represented in memory.

The dynamism of today's business era demands an augmentation of employable skills in business education and this is considered as a huge task by all the educational institutions. The essence of business education is to develop business students with a wide range of industrial knowledge, skills and abilities. The focus therefore is to facilitate the performance of business graduates on the job and this demands a set of skills that correlate with the job. To add to the subject-specific skills that are required of a business graduate will be the ability of these candidates to hone their team building and communication skills. The need of the hour amidst these challenges is to ensure that the goals of academia and the needs of employers are in harmony.

According to Jackson and Chapman (2012), supervisors and managers perceived that the graduate-skill gap of business students revealed a proficiency in non-technical skills and a deficiency in essential managerial skills. With respect to this assertion, Jackson (2010) earlier stated that pedagogy serves as a means of bridging this graduate-skill gap. The practice and method of teaching known as pedagogy in its general sense, is very essential in helping individuals to develop skills. However, James, Warhurst, Tholen, and Commander (2013) redirected the efforts of educationists to investigations which focus on providing graduate skills based on demand by employers and industry.



Business graduates are positioned in a wide range of varied employment capacities and the order of the day is for these graduates to be in possession of certain peculiar competences which will facilitate the transition from being a graduate to being an employee or entrepreneur. Researchers encourage the need to graft essential competencies into the educational arena to make business graduates useful and employable to industry and society. The competencies that are usually cited as expedient for the employment of business graduates are oral and written communication, analyzing skills, planning and organizing skills, negotiating and persuading skills, cooperation, leadership, numeracy and ICT skills. These have been pointed out over a span of many years by literature to be the competences that have been repeatedly propagated by employers, business leaders and academia in terms of employability among management graduates. Selected studies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century relating to employability skills are:

- i. **Written communication:** Bhatia and Hynes (1996) concluded that topics that are highly rated by the graduate business students are those including making presentations, writing memos, letter and business reports. Also, Moore and Morton (2017) stated that the ability to communicate clearly and with accuracy at a professional level has been cited as one of the top skills requested by employers repeatedly. Jackson (2010) asserted that from a lecturer's point of view, it appears that technological advances have led to a decline in the writing skill of graduates especially with the use of abbreviated English in texts and e-mails.

- ii. Oral Communication: Maes, Weldy and Icenogle (1997) and Omar, Bakar and Rashid (2012) asserted that oral communication happens to be the most important competency expected of graduates and in this case management graduates entering the world of work. Oral skills are required even at the entry level as they are expected to pay attention to instructions, converse and provide feedback. A study of Council for Industry and Higher Education [CIHE] (2008) reveals that employers consider good communication skills to be an important requirement. However, the ability of graduates in expressing themselves seems unsatisfactory.
- iii. Investigating and Analyzing Skills: Braun (2004) emphasizes the need for business schools to inculcate the skill of critical thinking more than any other thing. In line with this statement, Awayiga, Onumah and Tsameny (2010) play a supporting role by concluding that analytical and critical thinking has been rated as one of the most important skill of professionalism by both graduates and employers. To add to that, verbal and logical reasoning as well as soft skills is a stronger indicator of employability than the grades obtained in school (Gokulades, 2010).
- iv. Planning and Organizing: One other skill to be of most importance when recruiting graduates was considered to be planning and organizing (CIHE, 2008). Other literature such as Mallick and Chaudhury (2000) supported the claim made by academics and practitioners that the ability of graduates to set priority has been the reason behind the improvement in marketing education.

- v. Negotiating and Persuading: Out of 24 transferable skills, Irish employers identified the level of negotiation skills to be unsatisfactory in recent graduates (Curry, Sherry & Tunney, 2003). According to Institute of Directors [IOD] (2007), some of the skills rated by United Kingdom employers in relation to competency gap were influencing and negotiation skills.
- vi. Cooperating: Financial Services Skills Council [FSSC] (2007) emphasized interpersonal skills to be a crucial element for improving the competency of business graduates. A supporting argument was raised by Chaturvedi, Yadav and Bajpai (2011) that mastering the hard skills is important however, the soft skill of interpersonal relations is equally important to be considered a good manager or leader.
- vii. Leadership: Brownell and Chung (2001) were of the opinion that education that is competency-based provides the means that is most effective for equipping business students to become good leaders in a global world. Benjamin and O'reilly (2011) further argued that leadership development is often cited as an important organizational priority.
- viii. Numeracy: IOD (2007) recognized numeracy as one of the most important employability skill in recent graduates especially business graduates seeking employment in the field of finance.
- ix. ICT skills: Workforce Development Agency, Singapore (2006) acknowledged the integral need of ICT skills among the graduate

employable skills due to emerging globalization and digital technologies characterizing the business world today.

Although these studies have indicated these number of skills, a careful interrogation of recent studies have drawn out six of these skills to be what employers really require of management graduates. These skills are communication, problem solving, teamwork, Interpersonal, leadership and ICT.

### **Communication Skills**

With regards to the skills that employers expect of graduates, a survey was conducted by National Association of College Education United Kingdom (2009). The findings of this survey were that communication was considered as the skill of most importance for graduates in the workplace. The survey reported however, that employers found most graduates to be deficient in communication skill. According to Nghia (2019), formal and informal methods of communication as well as good interpersonal skills are part of the set of soft skills that add up to the social duties of a person. Hoe and Jangwan (2016) asserted that a strong and healthy interpersonal relationship was founded upon good communication.

Towers-Clark (2015) and Masclé (2013) indicated that employers attach high recognizance to persons who communicate skillfully in writing and speaking and most employers appreciate that level of competence as integral to job acquisition. Towers-Clark further emphasized the need for communicating orally with skill and its inevitable role associated with bringing ideas to bare with a high sense of clarity and conviction. Being able to communicate with such clarity complements the presentation of ideas as well as bringing people together to work

harmoniously in a team, directing affairs in meetings and interacting effectively across employees with diverse backgrounds (Garwood, 2012). Therefore, to have access to the world of work irrespective of the opportunities they consider, graduates ought to acquire the critical skill of communicating orally and in writing (Miller, Biggart & Newton, 2013).

### **Problem Solving skill**

Developing the skill of solving problems is one of the most difficult stage of learning. The process involved in solving problems requires one to acquire the skills to process and organize information. Syafii and Yasin (2013) stated that to be able to acquire and exhibit the skill of problem solving demand that an individual thinks critically, logically and creatively and sees situations from diverse perspectives. Problem solving has also been indicated as a process that requires the different levels of learning, that is, cognitive and affective-behavioural. This process facilitates the discovery, invention and identification of responses suitable for specific problematic situations (Wang & Chiew, 2010).

To simplify these elaborations, problem solving skill demands the ability to plan, organize, evaluate, adopt and take necessary action. Belzer, D'zurilla and Maydeu-Olivares (2002) emphasized that the acquisition of problem solving skill has a likelihood of influencing significantly an employee's success in the workplace. To be an individual that is known for possessing the capacity to solve problems, one requires the ability to identify a problem, develop plausible ways of addressing the problem, and make a sound logical choice amongst the alternative

solutions with the perspective of reaching the desired result (Hoe & Jangwan, 2016).

### **Teamwork skill**

In recent years, one of the norms that has characterized the workplace is teamwork. The ability to successfully participate in teamwork has been cited often as being a critical criterion for hiring (Brock, McAliney, Ma & Sen, 2017). The growing need of this skill has led to organizations showing increasing interest in recruiting individuals with teamwork skills (Agwu, 2015). Increase in productivity and creativity as well as more effective decision making are a few significant contributions of teamwork at the workplace. Additionally, Ahles and Bosworth (2004) stated that one of the major skills that have contributed to workforce readiness has been recognized as teamwork. Although these benefits are much appreciated, the challenge of meeting deadlines is peculiar to teamwork (Brock et al., 2017). Other challenges such as poor management of diversity and lack of effective communication are also associated with teamwork (Agrawal, 2012; Payne, Hudson, Akehurst & Ntoumanis, 2013).

### **Interpersonal skill**

According to Zhang (2018), interpersonal skills as a term is most times interchangeably used with other terms such as social skills and social competence. Interpersonal skills are the social skills that facilitate interaction and communication with others. It demands the capacity to interact with others with sensitivity and skill. Due to its widely used nature, there has not been a unique definition of the term that has been generally accepted. However, because human

relationships intertwine mostly with professional life, Spitzberg and Cupach (2011) defined interpersonal skills as the ability of an individual to manage professional relationships effectively. Self-awareness is regarded as another integral element of interpersonal skill and for one to demonstrate interpersonal skills effectively, it is imperative to recognize one's own motives, prejudices and experiences and to be conscious of the perceptions of others. Hayes (2002) propagated that self-awareness can contribute to interpersonal competence and effective performance. According to Hayes, one way individuals tend to work well with people is to master the skill of interpreting the actions and speeches of others.

### **Leadership skill**

The substance of leadership is the ability to achieve desired goals by utilizing effectively the abilities and talents of a team (Prieto, 2013). Amidst daily business activities, leadership becomes a necessary tool for influencing, negotiating with, and rendering services to customers and for dispute resolutions as well. Hu and Liden (2011) argued that the potential leadership qualities of students can be largely influenced by integrating the training of leadership in higher education. Lok and Crawford (2004) similarly concurred that the development of leadership qualities in students are an expedient aspect of their curriculum due to its necessity at the workplace. Tiraieyari and Hamid (2015) therefore argued that leadership is one of the predictors for employability orientation.

### **ICT Skill**

ICT skills stand for Information Communication Technology and is considered as everyday use of technology to access and analyze available

information and also serves as a means of communication. ICT enables organizations to operate more efficiently, therefore recruiting individuals with ICT skills is critical to the smooth running of any business (Buarki, Hepworth, & Murray 2011). Effectively using ICT systems gives the employees adequate time to concentrate on areas of their job that require soft skills (Osmani, Weerakkody, Hindi, Al-Esmail, Eldabi, Kapoor & Irani, 2015). In recent times, employers are of the expectation that their staff have basic ICT skills. This expectation even applies to job roles where ICT skills may not have been an important requirement in the past. In previous years, paper-based records were the norm among retailers to record information on stock levels. Nowadays, retail shop operators use computerized systems to manage inventory. The system is automatically updated as items are purchased. This enables retail managers to re-order items promptly when stock levels are running low and to monitor shopping trends.

### **Perceptions on Management Studies**

Business education is an aspect of education which is skill-based and therefore inculcates within students the knowledge, skills and values needed to operate in the business industry. Business education could help students acquire skills expedient for the identification of viable investment opportunities and proper management of business ventures. Business education can therefore be seen as one major aspect of education which is climaxed at higher education institutions. Business education covers various academic disciplines such as management studies. To fully understand management studies, there will be a need to go back in time to look at the definitions in the past and compare to the present time. This is



necessary due to the rate of globalization and its influence on education. Popham, Blockhus and Schrag (1975), concluded after reviewing various definitions given at the time that management studies is an academic discipline that prepares business students to enter into and advance in jobs within business, to manage effectively and efficiently their own entrepreneurial activities and to be intelligent participants in a business economy.

In recent years, management studies has been defined as an educational programme which provides students with knowledge, skills and understanding needed to perform management functions successfully in the business world as a producer or consumer of goods and services (Abdullahi, 2002). The business world is usually controlled by two key players, that is, producers and consumers. The ability to effectively belong to either of these two parties requires the possession of some skills and knowledge specific to the business industry. The role of management studies therefore is to help students acquire these necessary skills expected of key players in the industry. Some researchers such as Osuala (2004) are of the view that management studies deals with a broad area of knowledge concerned with the economic system of a nation and also brings to bear the rate of business contentment and experience that prepare individuals to become effective participants in the economy. Therefore, according to Osuala, management studies is not only concerned with preparing students to become effective key players in the industry but also to become effective citizens within the society. Aliyu (2013) stated that the role of management studies emphasizes the need for:

- a. general knowledge to enable students become effective consumers, workers and citizens in the economy.
- b. specialized knowledge to enable students develop and gain careers in business.
- c. background instruction to prepare and motivate students for further studies and professional careers.

The forgoing discussion has revealed that as the years go by, the definition of management studies continues to experience change. This implies that business education is flexible and ought to meet the present day needs. According to Ajisafe, Bolarinwa and Tuke (2015), business educators have come to the consensus that, change is a factor of life. From the days of the typewriter to the computer age, the curriculum of business education has continually reformed itself to meet the contemporary needs of today's business world. Thus, the benefits of business education rest on its ability to identify and keep up with the demands of employers. This poses a challenge to both instructors and learners of business education. Nonetheless, it is incumbent on instructors of business education to adjust to these ever-changing challenges to ensure that business programmes meet the needs of society.

The twenty-first century is characterized by increase in technological innovations, newer challenges in the economy, need for multi-lingual proficiencies and rising globalization, just to mention a few. An attempt to explain the term globalization will be to rent the use of phrases such as the transition of human society into the third millennium (Beck, 2018). To deliver to light this definition

will be to describe globalization as an effort which employs strategies to deal with the world, or a widespread phase of it, as a single platform where businesses are conducted. As country-wide boundaries are blurred as a result of the swiftness that comes with the transfer of information, knowledge has grown to be an effective useful resource through which organizations conduct their businesses. This places a tremendous responsibility on education establishments to meet the challenges introduced by this new dimension. Gill and Lashine (2003) assert that the motive of education is to enhance the knowledge base of a state and consequently to shape the future of a nation.

It has been propagated more frequently that coaching and education systems are pivotal in meeting the current day task as well as developing variants in the operations of businesses. Therefore, training and education structures ought to realign themselves so as to accompany a profitable transition to what is recognized as a knowledge-based economic system and society (Nijhof 2005; Keeling, 2006). To this argument, the question then asked is whether or not business education is nurturing enough successful and motivated business graduates to manage and coexist with these challenges. The notion that management creates an especially essential connection among individual's performance at the organizational level, organizational effectiveness and economic development is everyday belief. With this commonly believed notion, managers ought to play an extra great function in the improvement and success of corporations and the nation as a whole (Analoui & Hosseini, 2001).

Management studies is about helping university business students to strengthen job-related behaviours that will enable them enhance performance at the individual and corporate level (Krishman, 2008). The nature of skills needed by employers varies in relation to the type of job needed to be performed in an organization. However, there are also skills that generally transcend through varied jobs. These competencies refer to certain personal characteristics inherent in a person which are relevant from one job function to another. They also refer to skills and capabilities judged as fundamental to carry out a particular function (Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016).

McLaughlin (1995) postulated that as modifications occur in the nature of jobs, the nature of training and abilities also require change. The challenge consequently is confronted by educators as they put together students to communicate and articulate their needs in a greater productive way. The following are imperative propositions that can be drawn:

- i. significant contributions will be made towards academia, essential skills for solving problems, work attitudes and employable capabilities of individuals through the application of competency-based learning.
- ii. persons will be provided with relevant and appropriate content aligned with challenging standard relevant technical knowledge and capabilities needed to prepare for emerging professions.
- iii. employability is likely achieved through skills and competency acquisition.

The relationship between abilities and the performance of employees is very strong. According to Potnuru and Sahoo (2016), competence is generally the performance of one's duties primarily based on one's capability to achieve definite job related duties. Chung-Herrera, Enz and Lankau, (2003) also postulated that competency includes information skills, abilities and behavior required to efficiently perform in an organization. The researchers further stated that a competency model is developed to enhance the ability of an organization to meet its strategic goal through human resources capability. Employable skills may not always be specific to a particular job, but can also be abilities which transcend throughout all varied job opportunities.

Ley and Albert (2003) further indicated that competencies that are job related are a set of performance indicators that have been observed over time. They include knowledge, skills and attitudes that are associated with high performance and that provide organizations with some competitive edge. Employers have indicated that many job applicants at entry level are deficient in employable competencies and desire that business educators place serious emphasis on developing these skills in students (Nesaratnam, Karan & Von, 2018). Some business experts have queried the present effectiveness of business education and have alleged that business education in its existing structure does no longer make top notch contribution to excellence in business practice (Ghoshal, 2005). Hambrick (2007) reported that as far back in the 1950s, business schools had been accused of no longer being as academic as they have to be. According to Damoah, Peprah & Obrefo (2021), in Ghana, there are still gaps between what higher

education is offering its students and what industry requires from graduates at the entry-level.

According to Mintzberg (2003), the trouble with management schooling is that it is business education, and leaves a distorted impression of management as a function. Baah-Boateng and Twum (2021) indicated that, managers in Ghana claim that fresh graduates with backgrounds in management and administration often exhibit poor skills due to low quality of education and skills training. Mintzberg similarly argued that management is an exercise that has to blend an appropriate deal of craft with a certain amount of art and science however, management studies often overemphasizes the science and does not create a good blend between management theories and practice. As indicated by Mintzberg, it appears there is a great and unfortunate divide or lacuna between the practice of management and management studies. He similarly cautioned that business schools be reconceived to meet industry needs.

Duncan (1974), also asserted that although managers and academia have different value perceptions, they do have similar ideas about the nature of the schism between business management practice and management studies. Clearly, there has been a gap between management education and management practice over the years. Although these works have given some insight to these gaps, Akpor-Robaro (2018) stated that the peculiarity of the African surroundings requires an essential look at the interrelationship between management theories and management practice in Africa. He argued that theories of management fail, especially in the African environment. He in addition argued that theories of

management are not coherent with the African environment and are irrelevant to African situations and proposes that there is a need to develop theories of management that are rooted in existing facts in Africa.

### **Perceptions on Higher Education Institutions (HEI)**

HEI refers to education beyond senior high school particularly one that is offered by business schools. According to Ekpoh (2015), higher education plays a pivotal role in equipping youths for employment. Higher education institutions are generally seen as major players in the development of human capital. It is therefore expected of higher education institutions to reform themselves to be able to develop the human capital needed in the present day.

There has been frequent discussion in the academic community regarding the relationship between higher education (HE) and employability. Both government and employers have placed enormous pressure on higher education to produce graduates with adequate and relevant attributes, knowledge and capabilities needed to be employable and to work successfully. The nature of the relationship between higher education and employability has raised concerns among many regarding the readiness of business graduates to enter into the world of business and to function effectively and efficiently. Higher education institutions are therefore facing intense pressure to produce employable graduates (Crayford, Fearon, McLaughlin, & van Vuuren, 2012).

Most students begin their tertiary education with the expectation that the curriculum will provide them with opportunities to acquire the competencies necessary to perform jobs and advance in their careers. Employers as well expect

that higher education provides students with the employable skills required to perform jobs once they get employed (Bok, 2009). The hiring and promotion of employees have become dependent on certain critical skills such as communication, leadership, team building and attributes of entrepreneurship such as creativity, determination, tolerance, risk management and positive attitude towards change and initiative (Audibert & Jones, 2002).

There have however been some conflicts between academia and employers as educators in HEIs express their concern regarding the discontentment of employers with respect to the skills and qualities they inculcate in students. This is because employers increasingly voice concern of the quality of product the universities channel out as graduates. According to Baah-Boateng and Twum (2020), managers of some surveyed firms in Ghana have expressed dissatisfaction towards graduates with background of humanities and business administration from various tertiary institutions in Ghana recruited for administrative task, stating that some of these graduates are not able to exhibit simple communication skills.

Employers on the other hand have also been accused of not communicating clearly the skills that they expect of graduates that they want to hire and that even in situations where there exists some form of collaboration between HEIs and industry, the implementation of systematic changes are difficult because of the already existing structure of education (Richens, 1999). Several researchers such as Dabalén, Oni, and Adekola (2001), Egulu (2004), Livanos (2010) and Talargae (2012) have indicated that the lack of congruence between labour market needs and the skills possessed by business graduates is the root cause of university graduates'



unemployment. There is therefore a growing pressure on HEI to develop and inculcate relevant qualities in students to prepare them for the global job market (Gibb, 2008). Thus, in earlier years, Sanusi (2002), stated that even though higher education is likely to lead to gainful employment and a certain standard of living, the influence of education on employability is dependent on the extent to which the attributes of education is in tandem with the labour market and is able to adapt to the emerging dynamics in the economy.

It is important therefore for business schools in HEIs to identify and modify their mainstream curriculum to include factors that are essential for influencing students' acquisition of employable skills. The peculiarity of business education emanates from its intuitive nature and therefore requires HEIs to create opportunities for more hands-on experience and to encourage teachers to design appropriate teaching strategies with enhanced creativity and innovation. Some teaching methods have been indicated in literature, namely, traditional methods wherein learners become passive receivers of knowledge through lectures; and experiential approaches whereby learners construct knowledge in the process of doing (Asonitou, 2015; Adcroft, Willis, & Dhaliwal, 2004; Fiet, 2001; Sexton & Upton, 1987; Hynes, 1996).

The traditional methods have received some criticisms as they place less emphasis on practical aspects and more on theory. As indicated by Baah-Boateng and Twum (2020), managers of some surveyed firms in Ghana have claimed that inappropriate teaching methods as well as insufficient exposure may be the causes for poor quality of education and skills training. The negative effect of this

approach is its ineffectiveness in facilitating the development of employable skills and capabilities in students (Collins & Robertson, 2003). On the other hand, strategies of experiential learning such as business or management simulation, case based learning, internships and role plays are the approaches that have been advocated for the teaching of business courses (Henry, Hill & Leitch, 2005). To this, Reedy (2019) and Dania, Bakar and Mohamed (2014) indicated some factors that HEIs should consider in achieving such objective. One of these factors identified by these studies was industrial training.

According to Nduro, Anderson, Peprah and Twenefour (2015), industrial training has been seen by many students to be a very valuable process of learning and expect that such a training should receive academic credit and a grade. Baah-Boateng and Twum (2021) reiterated this by adding that although some universities encourage industrial training, it is often unstructured due to poor coordination among teachers, students and industries that host students. Fox (2001) and Neuman (1999) disclosed industrial training to be an opportunity to close the gap between school theory and practical reality. To this, Chiu, Mahat, Rashid, Razak and Omar (2016) indicated that HEIs ought to consider the integral role of industrial training programmes in students' acquisition of soft skills competency.

### **Empirical Review**

This section takes a look at studies conducted by other researchers which are related to the problem under investigation in this study. It critically considered works conducted in the area of employable skills perceived to be important for graduates, differences in perceptions of some stakeholders of graduate

employability, the level of employable skills of students and teaching strategies perceived to enhance students' acquisition of employable skills.

### **Employable Skills perceived to be important for University Graduates**

In assessing the employable skills of students in universities in South-South Nigeria, Ekpoh (2015), asserted that there has been an alarming rate of unemployment among graduates in Nigeria and that the negative effects of this situation on the economy and society as a whole are devastating. The researcher further postulated that education plays an integral role in equipping students with employability skills and that the relationship between education and employment is dependent on the degree to which the attributes of education are in line with the labour market.

In Ekpoh's (2015) study, the researcher covered the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, with respondents as final year students drawn from four universities in the region during the 2013/2014 academic year and a sample size of 400, that is, 100 students from each of the universities. The researcher employed the use of 'Employability Skills Questionnaire' with a 4-point rating scale and adopted the survey research design. The questionnaire measured the following variables: communication, team work, integrity, self-confidence, planning, writing, ICT, problem solving, analytical skills, leadership skills, critical thinking skills, decision making skills and initiative skills. Data generated from the instrument were analyzed using descriptive tools such as percentages, frequencies and mean. The researcher concluded that the employable skills assessed were important for management graduates to be employed and to remain in employment

and further suggested that employable skills should form a central part of the programme of study for university students and that there should be an organized linkage and cooperation between universities and labour market.

Geel (2015), also investigated undergraduate business management students' employable skills. In the study, the researcher asserted that universities to a large extent, play a role in helping university students develop employable skills. The researcher further asserted that universities can better do this by collating information from the job markets and economic environment. A mixed method approach was used to collect the data of 45 final year undergraduate business management students in North-West University, South Africa. The researcher therefore adopted the survey design under the quantitative approach and administered a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire which measured the following skills: communication, self- management, problem solving and team work. The quantitative data was analyzed in the form of descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) using the SAS 9.3 statistical analysis program. The researcher concluded that communication, self-management, problem solving and team work skills were important skills expected of management graduates.

Just as Ekpoh (2015) and Geel (2015), Castillo (2014) also adopted the descriptive method of research and employed the use of survey questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire measured the following variables: communication skills, information management skills. numerical skills, thinking and problem solving skills, team work and personal management skills. SPSS for data analysis was used to analyze the data. The researcher collected data from 102 students and

the data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Weligamage (2009) as well conducted a study on graduates' employable skills using evidence from literature review. In her study, she also stated that universities play an important task in enhancing graduate employability skills. The study was conducted with the aim of identifying the skills needed by employers in different countries. Based on literature review on both theoretical and empirical studies, Weligamage (2009) concluded that the skills required by employers across different countries in Europe, the United States and Africa are time management, self-understanding, learning skills, team work skills, leadership skills, problem solving skills, working with diversity, career planning, understanding workplace and risk assessment skills.

Abas and Imam (2016) on graduates' competence on employable skills and job performance made a similar assertion that one important measure of success in the business environment is the ability of an employee to apply with competence, the knowledge, skills and values that are coherent with the needs of the job and to contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. In their study (Abas & Imam, 2016), an explanatory-correlational research design was used to determine the degree of relationship that exists between categories of employability skills and elements of contextual performance. The number of respondents were 220 which represented the groups of employers and employees of 110 each from 25 government institutions in the south-central part of Mindanao region in Philippines.

Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation was computed to determine the correlation of competence on employability skills categories and areas with contextual performance. In terms of employability skills, questionnaires

were administered. These questionnaires measured similar variables as measured by Ekpoh (2015) and Geel (2015). The results of the study showed a moderate relationship between fundamental skills and contextual performance of employees. Findings further revealed that although personal management skills had moderate relationship with employees' contextual behavior, contributory across all elements of contextual performance were the competence in personal adaptability and continuous learning. The results also indicated a moderate relationship between teamwork skills and contextual performance of employees and recommended that attention be given to the development of employable skills among students by employers, higher education institutions, policy makers and labour institutions.

Saad, Robani, Jano and Majid (2013) studied employers' perception on engineering, information and communication technology (ICT) students' employability skills. Their study was a survey of employers having Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) engineering and ICT students undergoing industrial attachments in their organisations. The study explored the perception of employers on the employable skills that technical students needed to acquire and the extent to which the employers are satisfied with students' level of employable skills. This study focused on both soft and hard skills of technical students.

According to Saad, et al. (2013), graduates' employability is one of the most debated issues in the current economic climate. They therefore adopted a combination of 13-item questionnaire related to the employability of engineering graduates. The employers were requested to rate on a 5-point Likert scale the employability skills they rate to be important to be acquired by technical students

and also their level of satisfaction on the level of employability skills possessed by the students. A total of 365 organisations responded to the questionnaire. The result of the study showed that the employers gave higher priority to problem identification and solving, followed by confidence, team work, ICT and entrepreneurial skills. In terms of the employers' level of satisfaction of students' level of employable skills, Saad, et al. (2013) indicated that the employers were generally satisfied with the students' level of employable skills. However, the skills they were most satisfied with were ability to continue learning independently and technologies.

Similar to this study was one conducted by Merrifield (2013). This study sought to assess how important employability skills were to teachers, young people and employers. The study focused on York and North Yorkshire, and West Yorkshire. The study adopted a qualitative approach to research. The researcher decided on a manageable group of participants including five to ten businesses, five sets of five young people to interview as a group and one teacher in up to five contrasting schools. According to Merrifield (2013), the employers and teachers identified skills such as business awareness, communication, organisational skills, problem solving, teamwork, planning, presentation skills, technology and time management.

A related study was conducted by Orji (2013) in the field of chemistry. Orji conducted an assessment of employability skills development opportunities for senior secondary school chemistry students. In the study, the researcher stated that nations are investing in education that will produce graduates that are highly self-

reliant, confident and competent. Measuring similar attributes as that of the researches discussed already, Orji employed the use of descriptive survey design to assess chemistry students' employability skills at the secondary school level. Data were collected from 200 students and 40 chemistry teachers by way of questionnaire. The result of this study showed that the students were competent with numeracy, independent study and team work skills being ranked the highest. Other skills such as problem solving, ICT skills and time management were ranked low.

In more recent years, Nesaratnam, Karan and Von (2018) conducted a study on graduate employability. According to the study, the researchers stated that skills shortage among graduates in Malaysia has become a serious constraint and represents a 23 per cent of total youth unemployment. Therefore, the study investigated the causes of graduate employability in Malaysia by involving a key stakeholder group, which is the employer. Nesaratnam, Karan and Von (2018) employed a qualitative research approach by interviewing ten employers to explore and enrich the graduate employability framework. The study affirmed and validated the 'soft skills' construct indicated by literature, that is, communication, teamwork, problem solving and leadership skills. The study gave an insight into the perspective of employers regarding graduate employability and further indicated that the concept of graduate employability has become more complex now than ever considering the dynamism that exists in the business community.

Reddy (2019) also examined the problems and perspectives of employability in higher education. The study discussed the concept of



employability, status of employability of students, the need for employability of students and pre-requisites for employability of students. The paper also identified the problems that face the employability of students. The researcher indicated that to secure employment, the students must develop among others communication skills, self-confidence/high aspirations, involve in extra-curricular activities and develop career related experiences. Reddy further stated that these factors are more likely to influence students' acquisition of employable skills and that higher education institutions have a responsibility to ensure the employability of their students.

The review of these empirical studies indicate that although similar attributes have been measured across different geographical areas and in different contexts over the years, the attributes that stand out even in recent times are communication skills, problem solving skills, team work skills, interpersonal skills, leadership skills and ICT skills

### **University Students' Level of Possession of Employable skills**

In Ekpoh's (2015) study, the researcher concluded that the level of acquisition of skills in terms of employability among the students were significantly high only in terms of communication skills, integrity skills and self-confidence skills, with the other skills not significantly high. Similarly, Castillo (2014) indicated that the level of the students' employable skills was above average and that among the skills that were measured, personal management skills was the highest. However, Geel (2015) concluded that students were not fully equipped to demonstrate, at the end of their study, the employable skills that were measured.

Geel further stated that this indication placed some burden on universities and their teaching staff to equip students with employable skills. Geel mentioned that although it might appear that employers do expect highly of graduates they do not expect graduates to be completely competent when they are employed. Graduates are expected to adapt and develop skills needed for specific work. Just as Epkoh (2015), Geel recommended that close relationships be established between universities and private sector in order to bridge the gap between education and practice.

Jovinia, Ab Rahim and Shamsiah (2014) assessed selected factors that influence students' acquisition of employability skills. The main purpose of the study was to assess the acquisition of employable skills by vocational students in Malaysia. A total of 214 students participated in the study. The employable skills of the students were measured using a 5-point Likert scale instrument comprising 40 items. The instrument measured skills such as basic skills, thinking skills, resource management skills, interpersonal skills, system and technology skills, and personal qualities. The students were requested to rank their self-perceived level of those skills. The study concluded that the students' employable skills were moderate. Students had high mean scores in only two aspects: personal qualities and interpersonal skills and had moderate scores in the other five aspects. Measuring similar attributes as that of the researches discussed already, Orji (2013) conducted a related study. The researcher employed the use of descriptive survey design to assess chemistry students' employable skills at the secondary school level. Data were collected from 200 students and 40 chemistry teachers by way of

questionnaire. The result of this study showed that the students were competent with numeracy, independent study and team work skills being ranked the highest. Other skills such as problem solving, ICT skills and time management were ranked low.

These empirical reviews indicate that whereas some researchers assert that graduates possess the needed employability skills required in the business environment. However, some also rejected this claim. This may mean that the level of employable skills and competence of graduates depends on the context in which these graduates may be found.

### **Teaching Methods that enhance Students' Acquisition of Employable Skills**

Wongnaa and Boachie (2018) conducted a study on perception and adoption of competency-based training (CBT) by academics in Ghana. The researchers asserted that the rise in graduate unemployment and the poor linkage between university education and industry is gaining popularity in Ghana's universities. These education institutions are being tasked to produce business-oriented and well-grounded graduates for industry who are ready to make use of knowledge acquired in university education to establish businesses that will help reduce unemployment in the country as well as working effectively in the nation's industry and service sectors.

Wongnaa and Boachie (2018) conducted the study using cross-sectional data collected from 300 faculty members of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, 5-point Likert scale, perception index, and the logit model were the

methods of analysis employed. The results of the survey showed that the overall perception index was 0.49, indicating that generally faculty members of KNUST agreed and had a positive perception of the potential of CBT in instilling employable skills in students. The researchers concluded that provision of appropriate teaching and learning resources that complement adoption of CBT, incentives, and competency-based education training for academics by university authorities and stakeholders in Ghana's tertiary education will enhance the adoption of CBT methodologies.

According to Merrifield (2013), the employers and teachers identified skills such as business awareness, communication, organisational skills, problem solving, teamwork, planning, presentation skills, technology and time management to be important for university graduates. The teachers also indicated that certain strategies were adopted to incorporate employable skills into the curriculum. These included group work, discussions, leading a presentation, debates and individual investigative work. These teaching strategies were in line with experiential learning strategies which were found to be effective in equipping students with employable skills.

Reddy (2019) also examined the problems and perspectives of employability in higher education. The study discussed the concept of employability, status of employability of students, the need for employability of students and pre-requisites for employability of students. The paper also identified the problems that face the employability of students. The researcher indicated that to secure employment, the students must develop among others communication

skills, self-confidence/high aspirations, be involved in extra-curricular activities and develop career related experiences. Reddy further stated that these factors are more likely to influence students' acquisition of employable skills and that higher education institutions have a responsibility to ensure the employability of their students.

### **Differences in Perceptions on Graduate Employability among some Stakeholders**

Lisá, Hannelová and Newman, (2019) studied the expectations of employers and employees regarding employability skills of university graduates. The researchers indicated that employability is predominantly conceptualized as the skills and personal attributes considered important by industry and needed by graduates in order to secure employment. The study was aimed at comparing the expectations of Slovak employers and students in terms of employability skills. Twenty-seven companies which employ university graduates working in the manufacturing and financial sectors, represented by a Managing Director or Human Resources Director and 534 university students in the Bratislava region completed a questionnaire that evaluated the perceived importance of and satisfaction with generic employability skills.

Employers perceived a lack of appropriate skills as the biggest barrier to employing graduates. With regard to the importance of skills, students considered only three skills to be more important than employers did; experience in the field, leadership and authority, and field knowledge. Compared to students, employers regarded engagement and willingness to take on extra work as the most important.

In terms of satisfaction, students were more satisfied than employers in nineteen skills from a total of thirty-two. Lisa, et al., intimated that to reduce the satisfaction gap between graduates and employers, higher education institutions can promote students' self-awareness through career psychological services centers.

A similar study was conducted by Succi and Canovi (2020) where the researchers compared perceptions of employers and students regarding employable skills of university graduates. The study sought to examine and compare students' and employers' perceptions regarding the importance of soft skills in different European countries. Results showed that 86% of respondents indicated an increased emphasis on soft skills over the last 5 to 10 years and that companies consider soft skills more important than students or graduates. Furthermore, major differences were also identified in the employers' and students' ranking of the 20 soft skills assessed by the researchers, indicating different levels of priorities. The researchers suggested that companies and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to work together not only to increase students' awareness of the importance of soft skills but also to guide them in taking individual responsibility to acquire and develop these essential skills in order to continuously adapt to the changing labour market and improve their employability.

In an earlier year, Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010) conducted a related study on the perceptions of university lecturers and employers on employable skills. The purpose of this study was to explore employability skills that employers, university lecturers and graduates value to bring to the workplace when graduates are applying for entry-level graduate jobs in the field of computer science in Sri

Lanka. A total of three samples were selected for this exploratory study, namely, graduates, employers, and university lecturers. Three self-administered survey questionnaires were developed targeting the three groups. In addition to descriptive statistics, paired sample t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and correlation analysis were used for the data analysis. The findings suggested that there were differences in the priorities given for employability skills by the four groups – male graduates, female graduates, employers, and university lecturers. Further, the findings suggested that employability skills are influenced by the gender of the graduates.

Singh and Singh (2008) also conducted a similar study on the perceptions of employers and graduates on employable skills. The main aim of the study was to identify the perceptions of employers concerning the employability skills needed in the job market and graduates' perception of the employability skills that they currently possessed. Seven factors were considered. Data were collected through two different sets of questionnaires intended to gauge employers' and graduates' perceptions, respectively. The results of the study revealed graduates and employers placed similar importance in terms of the ranking of employability skills, where both employers and graduates perceived the order of importance of employability skills to be the same. However, there was a difference between employers' and graduates' perceptions for all seven employable factors, where employers rated graduates much lower in terms of mean rank. The results of the study also suggested that younger employers tend to be more favourable to graduates' employability skills.

Segbenya, Oppong and Baafi-Frimpong (2021) examined the contribution of the mandatory national service to enhance the employability of tertiary graduates in Ghana. The study used the longitudinal descriptive survey design to sample 375 national service personnel (2018 and 2019 batches) of 13,874 service personnel posted to the Central Region of Ghana, and 31 employers. The study found that human relation, communication and experience to enter the job market were perceived higher by tertiary graduates in Ghana. Similarly, Damoah, Peprah and Brefo (2021) employed a survey design in conducting a study on perceptions of employers in Ghana regarding employable skills of university graduates. Employing a paired t-test analyses, findings of the study revealed that whilst the employers perceived graduate students to possess various critical skills which match industry demands, the graduate students fall short in these critical skills. The differences were statistically significant indicating that there are still gaps between what higher education is offering its students and what industry requires from graduates at the entry-level.

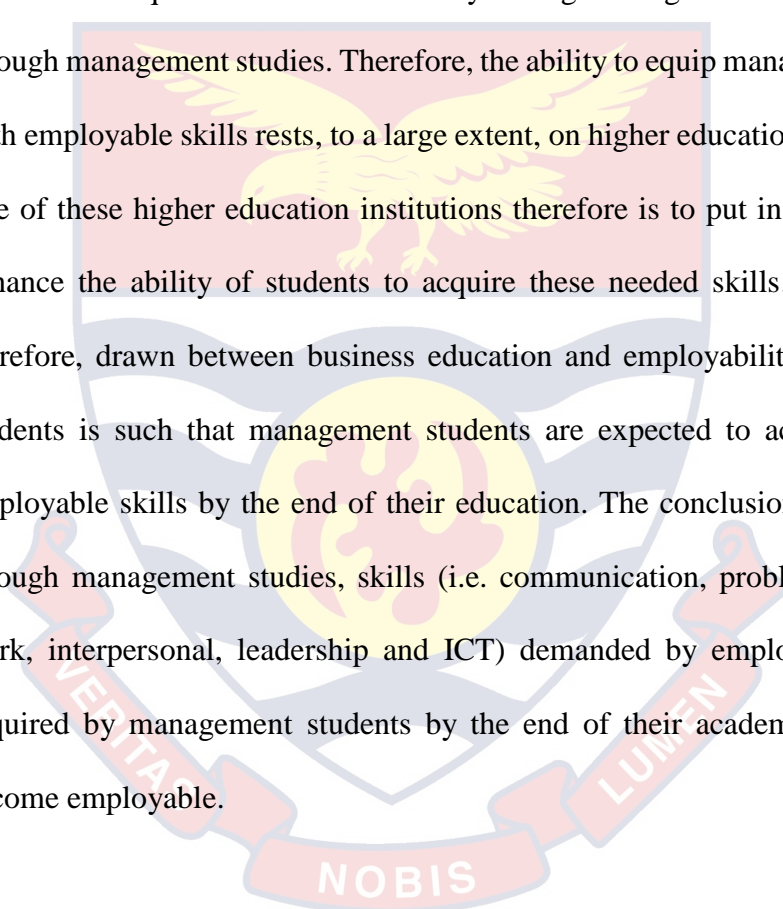
### **Chapter Summary**

The concept of employability as hitherto discussed has been a matter of concern among many researchers. To arrive at a single definition of the concept may be unlikely. However, it appears that there are certain similarities among the many definitions. Therefore, the concept of employability in line with identified similarities can be narrowed to mean the ability to gain and maintain an employment for which benefits may accrue to oneself, the community or to the economy. The ability to gain and maintain an employment requires that



management graduates possess and display certain skills that are demanded by those offering the employment. A critical review of literature with particular reference to empirical studies indicates that these skills, based on similarities among the studies, include communication, problem solving, team work, interpersonal, leadership and ICT skills.

The acquisition of these skills by management graduates can be facilitated through management studies. Therefore, the ability to equip management graduates with employable skills rests, to a large extent, on higher education institutions. The role of these higher education institutions therefore is to put in place factors that enhance the ability of students to acquire these needed skills. The relationship therefore, drawn between business education and employability of management students is such that management students are expected to acquire the needed employable skills by the end of their education. The conclusion therefore is that through management studies, skills (i.e. communication, problem solving, team work, interpersonal, leadership and ICT) demanded by employers ought to be acquired by management students by the end of their academic programme to become employable.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODS

#### Introduction

This chapter details the systematic approach and techniques adopted by the study. It provides a description of the context of the study in relation to the factors affecting employability of management students, providing an in-depth analysis of how the research was conducted, the rationale behind how it was conducted, and the manner that the data was collected and analyzed. It begins with the research philosophy, approach and design followed by the study area and population, sample and procedure for sampling, instruments for data collection, validity and reliability of instruments as well as procedures for data collection and analysis.

#### Research Philosophy

There are a number of philosophies that guide research in social sciences. A research philosophy is an overarching framework that organizes an approach to research (Aliyu, Bello, Kasim & Martin, 2014). The research philosophy adopted for this study was the positivist paradigm. The positivist paradigm asserts that real events can be studied empirically and explained with logical analysis. The criterion for evaluating the validity of a scientific theory is whether our theory-based predictions are consistent with the information we are able to obtain using our senses (Kaboub, 2008). The positivist paradigm has influenced to a large extent the approach towards research in the social sciences for decades and argues from the viewpoint that knowledge can and must be obtained objectively without the researcher's personal influence.

The positivist paradigm was adopted for the study because the issue of unemployment and its bearing on the acquisition of employable skills by graduates has generated diverse views from various stakeholders and therefore has led to a need to study the phenomenon logically and objectively to tease out the reality of the phenomenon from the perspectives of supervisors, employees and students as well. The tenets of the positivist paradigm and its framework was found appropriate to carry out this assessment due to its advocacy for objectivity and logical analysis.

### **Research Approach**

In the frame of this research, a quantitative approach was adopted to enable the researcher adopt a positivist philosophical assumption that encourages tightly controlled designs and statistical analysis that result into empirical observations and measures. Creswell (2014) indicated that quantitative approach to research is underscored by the assumptions of testing theories deductively, and has the tendency of protecting research against bias as well as being able to control for varied explanations and to enable a generalization and replication of the research. It is a research where the researcher determines the subject of the study; asks certain particular, narrow questions; accesses and collects data that can be quantified from respondents; makes an analysis of these data by employing the use of statistics; and without bias conducts the study in a manner deemed to be objective. Therefore, the researcher's goal to find answers to the reality of the phenomenon relating to acquisition of employable skills by management students guided the choice of this research approach.

This approach to research can be juxtaposed to that of the qualitative research that braces a way of viewing research that acknowledges an inductive style of research and focuses on individual meaning and the essence of acknowledging the complexity of a situation. Some features of quantitative research are that:

- i. It emphasizes a collection and analysis of information using numbers.
- ii. It measures definite traits of individuals by way of collecting scores.
- iii. It emphasizes the processes involved in comparing groups or factors that are related about individuals or groups in experiments, correlational studies, and surveys

These three features were incorporated in the data collection of this study to achieve objectivity. Participants were required to respond to the items on a questionnaire by choosing a particular score and then the employability traits of the participants measured by analysis of those scores. The scores were also used to compare between the categories of the respondents.

A research which employs the use of quantitative methods therefore deals with ascertaining with numbers as well as analyzing variables to achieve some specific results. It deals with utilizing and analyzing numerical data using certain techniques in statistics to answer questions such as who, what, when, and how many. Adding clarity to this explanation, Aliaga and Gunderson (2002), postulated that research by way of quantitative methods has to do with expounding an issue or phenomenon by way of gathering data in numerical form and making an analysis of the data with the help of certain particular statistical techniques. The aim of the researcher which is to provide objective analysis of the assessment of employable skills of

management students is better fostered through the quantitative approach to research.

### **Research Design**

To achieve the objectivity desired by the researcher, descriptive survey research design was used for the study. This type of research design is a survey that aids in describing the characteristics of a sample at a point in time and as well as aids in calling for answers relating to questions that are raised. It is also to provide solutions to challenges that have been realized, to investigate needs and to evaluate whether or not precise targets have been met. Survey research design also aids in establishing baselines to which future comparisons can be made, analyze patterns over a span of time, and generally, describe the existence of some phenomenon, in what amount, and in what context (Isaac & Michael, 1997).

As discussed already, in positivism studies the role of the researcher is limited to data collection and interpretation in an objective way. Descriptive surveys are very much suited to positivist approaches in exploring the social world for which reason the design was chosen for the study (Rahi, 2017). The outline of the study followed the classic format of the design which is it to derive hypotheses from theory, collect data in the form of responses to standardised questions that are designed to test the hypotheses, code the data in numerical format, analyse the data statistically and on a probability basis confirm or deny the hypotheses thereby, supposedly, confirming or amending the theory.

Kraemer (1991) came out with three features that distinguish survey research. The first feature is that survey research designs describe certain particular

elements of a targeted population quantitatively. In relation to this study, researcher was determined describe the level of employable skills of the management students quantitatively and without bias. Second, because data is collected from people, there is an element of subjectivity. This second feature was a limitation to the study. Whereas the researcher sought to reach objective conclusions, the responses of the participants were likely to be subjective based on each participant's perception on the questions posed. Third, survey research usually makes use of a sample of the population and then generalizes the findings back to the population. The researcher sought to generalize the level of employable skills of the entire management students in University of Cape Coast based on the sample drawn from the population.

There are two steps when using a survey design (Levy & Lemeshow, 1999). A plan for sampling participants must be developed first. This describes the method that the researcher will use to select the sample from the population (i.e. sampling and sampling procedure). Furthermore, the plan for sampling participants also stipulates the manner the sample will be selected from the population, how the size of the sample will be ascertained adequately and the media choice that will be used to administer the survey. The second step is that approaches used to obtain the estimates of the population, estimates of the sample data and how to estimate the reliability of the population estimate, ought to be determined. This procedure includes identifying preferred response rate and the desired accuracy level for the survey (Salant & Dillman, 1994).

The survey design demands the individuals who will make use of the data from the survey and those who will conduct the survey make an input in the survey design. The users of the data must identify the variables that will be measured, the level of validity and reliability required to ensure the estimates are useful and any limitations on resource that are likely to exist when the research is conducted (Levy & Lemeshow, 1999). The individuals who conduct the survey need to offer increased input with regards to requirements of resource and provide alternative procedures for sampling that are feasible and appropriate to the task. Statisticians develop a survey design by integrating these inputs to match the requirements of the data users within the specified resource constraints.

### **Profile of the Study Institution**

The study organisation covered Heads of Department, administrators and management students from the School of Business all in University of Cape Coast. The university is a well-known public institution situated in Cape Coast, Ghana. The university, which is located on a hill overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and located five kilometers west of Cape Coast, was birthed in 1962 due to the rise in need for manpower in education who are highly qualified and skilled. With reason that the two existing public universities at that time were not equipped to carry out that mandate, the University of Cape Coast was founded initially to provide graduate teachers for the second cycle institutions. Moving forward, the university has, as part of its functions, the mandate to train doctors and healthcare professionals, as well as education planners, administrators, and agriculturalists.

The University of Cape Coast has as part of its organization Academic Departments and the School of Business. Academic Departments of the university facilitate the academic work of students and are headed by Heads of Department. These Heads are assigned administrators who assist in the daily administration of the departments.

The School of Business plays an immense role in training and challenging vibrant and competent graduates to meet business needs in the world today. With the presence of competent academic staff, the School commits to becoming a leader both in the nation and sub-region in preparing students for quality career in the business society. It has a niche in the provision of technical assistance to small and micro enterprises. It is a centre of excellence offering a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in research and outreach in Business and allied disciplines.

Department of Management is one among the departments in the School of Business with a vision to promote academic excellence in management and research. Its mission is to prepare students to be effective, efficient and ethical leaders in their professional careers through high quality teaching, research and outreach in management and allied disciplines. The overall goal of the management programme is to turn out graduates who can provide efficient administrative support to top management and also provide the vital link between the upper and lower levels of an organization.

### **Population**

A population is any group of individuals who have one or more common characteristics (Creswell & Crewell, 2005). The target population for this study



comprised the heads of academic department and their administrators and level 400 management students of the School of Business. The heads of department of the university were chosen for this study because the daily management tasks and supervisory role of the heads of department require close working relationship with the administrators of their respective departments and therefore were in position to identify the employable skills which ought to be possessed by the administrators. The Heads of department are in this study referred to as supervisors.

The study of management as a programme is intended to equip students with skills needed to perform managerial and administrative tasks, hence, the choice of administrators to indicate the employable skills that are required for the success of their work. The administrators that formed the population for the study were one main administrator for each of the heads of department. The administrators are in this study referred to as employees. The level 400 management students were then chosen for the study because they had acquired enough educational experience and were preparing to enter the job market. The total number of heads of department within the target population was 99. The total number of administrators within the target population was 99 and students within the target population was 136. The population distributions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Population Size*

GROUPS	Total
B.COM. (Management)	136 <sup>a</sup>
Heads of Department	99 <sup>b</sup>
Administrators	99 <sup>c</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>334</b>

Source: a – School of Business (2020)

b – Directorate of Academic Affairs (2020)

c – Implied from ‘b’

### **Sampling and sampling Procedure**

The aim of sampling is to allow for statistical inference, that is, making generalizations about the entire population based on the characteristics of the sample. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to sample the students, administrators and the heads of department. This technique increases precision, ensures adequate representation (Tryofos, 1996). The primary idea behind stratified sampling was to divide a heterogeneous population into smaller groups. This was to ensure that the units in the sample frame were homogeneous with regards to the characteristics under study within the subpopulation but heterogeneous with regards to the characteristics under study among the subgroups known as strata. The use of the proportionate technique was to ensure that each group contributed an equal percentage of the population to the sample frame. The sampling technique also used randomization to ensure that each member of the population had an equal chance of participation.

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for a population of 334, a sample size of 181 is adequate. However, to increase the response rate, the sample size was

increased by 20% to get a sample size of 217 and stratified proportionately across the groups (see appendix E). This is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Sample Size Distribution*

<b>GROUPS</b>	<b>S</b>
Management Students	89
Heads of Department	64
Administrators	64
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>217</b>

Source: Field data (2020)

### **Data Collection Instrument**

A research instrument is a measurement tool designed to collect data on a subject of interest for the purpose of research. The research instrument used in the study was questionnaire. Questionnaire was chosen because it takes less time to administer and also ensures the anonymity of respondents (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Muijs, 2004). Also, questionnaire is characterized by a consistency of presentation of questions to the respondents and is also probably the most common data collection instrument used in educational research which is more familiar to respondents (Muijs, 2004).

The researcher employed three separate questionnaires for the three categories of respondents: questionnaire for heads of department, questionnaire for administrators and questionnaire for management students. The questionnaire for the heads of departments was a 14-item questionnaire divided into two sections. The first section measured the level of importance they attached to each of the

employable skills listed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The second section measured the degree to which they rate their administrators' level of possession of those employable skills. This was also measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (do not possess) to 5 (fully possess).

The questionnaire for the administrators in like manner was a 14-item questionnaire divided into two sections. The first section measured the level of importance they attached to each of the employable skills listed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The second section measured the degree to which they perceive themselves to possess those employable skills. This was also measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (do not possess) to 5 (fully possess).

The questionnaire for the students was a 31-item questionnaire divided into five sections. The first section requested that they indicate their gender, age, programme and their level. The second section measured the level of importance they attached to each of the employable skills listed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The third section measured the degree to which they perceived those employable skills to be integrated throughout the business curriculum on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not integrated) to 5 (fully integrated). The fourth section measured the degree to which they perceived themselves to possess those employable skills on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (do not possess) to 5 (fully possess). Lastly, the fifth section measured the degree to which they perceived a number of teaching methods were

applied by their lecturers also on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never applied) to 5 (fully applied)

### **Validity and Reliability of Survey Instrument**

Validity of survey instrument: The degree to which a test measures what it is meant to measure is known as validity (Lameck, 2013). The researcher ensured the validity of the instruments by reviewing the items on the questionnaire with the assistance of the supervisor and experts in management and graduate employability.

Reliability of survey instrument: According to Lameck (2013), consistency of the research instrument is referred to as reliability. This pertains to the fact that the research instrument should be able to produce the same results over repeated measures. The reliability of the instrument was conducted to ensure the study can be replicable. The questionnaire was pre-tested using heads of department, administrators and final year management students in Cape Coast Technical University. A total of 10 heads of department, 10 administrators and 20 final year management students participated in the pre-test. These represented at least 10% of the actual sample size of the study. This was supported by Baker (1994) who asserted that a sample size of 10% - 20% of the actual frame is reasonable to consider in a pilot test. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability of the research instrument. Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 22 was used. As a rule, Cronbach's Alpha value between 0.70 and 1.00 is considered adequate measure of internal consistency of the constructs being tested. The Cronbach's Alpha values were considered reliable as their reliability

values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Reliability Coefficient for Each of the Sub-scales on each Questionnaire*

Research Questions	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1. What employable skills do employers perceive to be important?	7	0.93
2. What employable skills do employees perceive to be important?	7	0.72
3. What is the students' self-perceived level of employable skills?	7	0.71
4. What teaching strategies do students perceive are applied to integrate employable skills across the curriculum?	6	0.72
5. What differences are there in the perceptions of employers and employees regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important?	7	0.93
6. What differences are there in the perceptions of employers and students regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important?	7	0.93

Source: Field Data (2020)

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher obtained a letter of authorization from the Department of Business and Social Sciences Education of the University of Cape Coast to undertake data collection for the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered in person to all respondents. This was to provide the researcher opportunity to briefly explain the purpose of the study to them. For heads of

department and administrators, copies of the questionnaire were administered to them in their various offices. Due to their busy schedule, the data collection took a period of three weeks.

With regards to the students, the researcher also sought permission from the School of Business of University of Cape Coast to conduct the study in the target population. The researcher personally administered the copies of the questionnaire to the respondents after explaining the purpose of the study to them. The respondents were given 25 minutes to complete the questionnaire after which the researcher collected the completed questionnaires.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

Data from the research were analyzed using the research questions and hypotheses as guide. The data was organized, coded and inputted into Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 22 program for analysis. The responses were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Research question one sought to determine the employable skills supervisors perceived to be important. It was measured on a 5-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine the degree to which they perceived the employable skills to be important. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of the responses given by the supervisors. A mean value below 3.00 indicated the supervisors attached a low level of importance to the employable skill.

Research question two sought to determine the employable skills employees perceived to be important. It was measured on a 5-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine the degree to which they perceived the employable skills to be important. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of the responses given by the employees. A mean value below 3.00 indicated the employees attached a low level of importance to the employable skill.

Research question three sought to determine the degree to which the students possessed the employable skills. It was measured on a 5-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (do not possess) to 5 (fully possess). It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine the degree to which they perceived themselves to possess the employable skills. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of the responses given by the students. A mean value below 3.00 indicated the students possessed low level of the employable skill.

Lastly, research question four sought to determine the degree to which various teaching methods were employed by the lecturers in teaching management classes. It was also measured on a 5-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (not applied) to 5 (fully applied). It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine the degree to which the teaching methods were applied by the lecturers. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of



the responses given by the students. A mean value below 3.00 indicated the students perceived a low level of application of the teaching method.

Research hypothesis one sought to find out whether there was a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and employees regarding the employable skill they perceived to be important. This research hypothesis had two variables, that is, employable skills as dependent variable and status (supervisor and employee) as the independent variable. In order to obtain the employable skills variable, the data on research questions one and two were transformed into a single variable known as employable skills and thereafter difference between perceptions of supervisors and employees analysed using Mann-Whitney U test at a 0.05 significant level.

Research hypothesis two sought to find out whether there was a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and students regarding the employable skill they perceived to be important. This research hypothesis had two variables, that is, employable skills as dependent variable and status (supervisors and students) as the independent variable. This was analysed using Mann-Whitney U test at a 0.05 significant level.

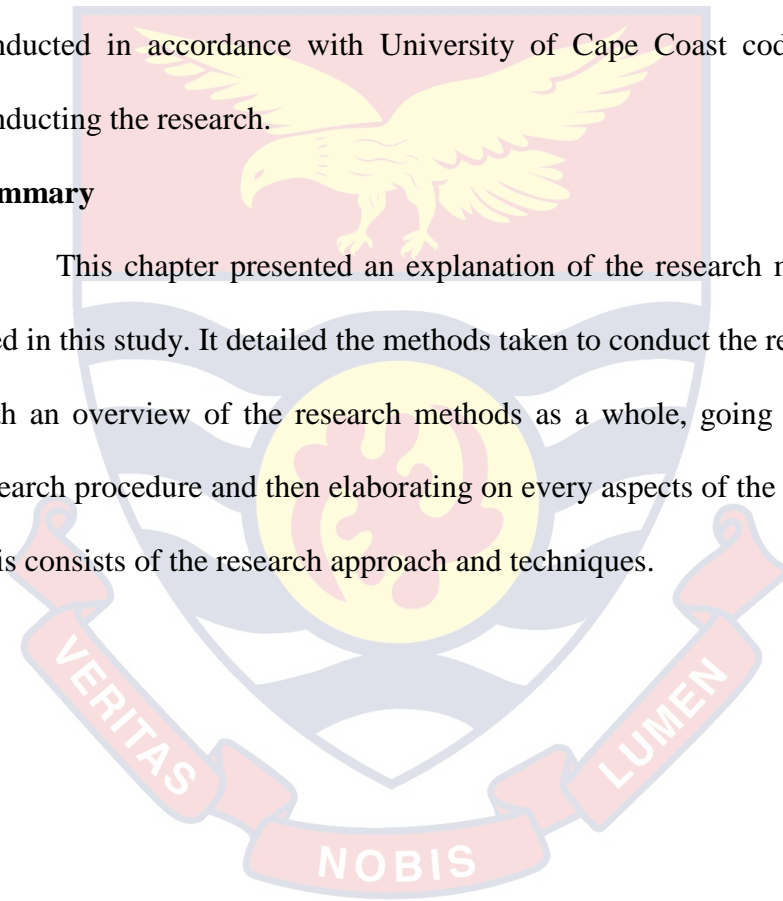
Mann-Whitney U test was therefore conducted to determine whether there were any differences in the perceptions of supervisors and employees regarding the employable skills they perceived to be important as well as differences in the perceptions of supervisors and students regarding the employable skills they perceived to be important.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Before data collection, ethical protocols were observed by making sure identities of respondents were concealed (anonymity) and their information were shielded from third party usage (confidentiality). Approval was sought from UCC Institutional Review Board to undertake the study. The researcher ensured that all respondents were informed of the purpose of the study. Therefore, this study was conducted in accordance with University of Cape Coast code of conduct for conducting the research.

## **Summary**

This chapter presented an explanation of the research methods that were used in this study. It detailed the methods taken to conduct the research, beginning with an overview of the research methods as a whole, going into detail on the research procedure and then elaborating on every aspects of the research methods. This consists of the research approach and techniques.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with the results of the data that were collected and presents the discussion of the results in relation to determining whether final year management students were able to acquire the needed employable skills by the end of their study. The chapter begins with an overview of the study, presents and discusses the results by research questions and hypotheses.

#### Overview of the Study

The central aim of the study was to find out whether final year management students in the University of Cape Coast were able to acquire the needed employable skills by the end of their study. To undertake such a study, it was imperative to foremost determine and confirm the employable skills that are relevant for the employment of management graduates in the workplace. A number of these skills were indicated in literature. However, key individuals in the university, that is, heads of academic department and their administrators were involved in the study due to their managerial and secretarial functions to confirm the relevance of the employable skills indicated in literature. These skills were then used to assess the students' level of employable skills. A quantitative approach was used and questionnaires were administered to respondents. A total of 64 heads of academic department, 64 administrators and 89 management students were involved in the study. The results of the study were discussed in line with the following research questions and hypotheses.

**Research Question 1: What employable skills do supervisors perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace?**

This research question was necessary to confirm the relevance of the employable skills indicated in literature. The response to this research question was solicited from the heads of academic department who play key roles in managerial functions. It was measured on a 5-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine the degree to which they perceived the employable skills to be important. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of the responses given by the supervisors. A mean value below 3.00 indicated the supervisors attached a low level of importance to the particular employable skill whereas a mean above 3.00 indicated that the supervisors attached a high level of importance to the employable skill. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: *Employable skills supervisors perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace*

Rank	Employability skills	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	Written communication skill: ability to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing	64	4.99	.121
2	Oral communication skill: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking	64	4.78	.452

Table 4, Continued

3	Problem-solving skill: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	64	4.59	.553
4	Interpersonal skill: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill	64	4.57	.527
5	Computer technology skill: ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry.	64	4.47	.701
6	Teamwork skill: ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	64	4.46	.633
7	Leadership skill: ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	64	4.21	.724
	Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation		4.58	.530

Source: Field data (2020)

Table 4 shows the level and rank of importance attached to each of the employable skills as indicated by supervisors. The written communication skill ( $M = 4.99$ ,  $SD = .121$ ) was given the highest priority followed by oral communication skill ( $M = 4.78$ ,  $SD = .452$ ), problem-solving skill ( $M = 4.59$ ,  $SD = .553$ ), interpersonal skill ( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = .527$ ), computer technology skill ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = .701$ ) and team work skill ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = .633$ ). The least important

employable skill according to the supervisors was leadership skill ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = .724$ ). The mean of means and average standard deviation were 4.58 and .530 respectively. These results were discussed concurrently with research question 2.

**Research Question 2: What employable skills do employees perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace?**

Similar to research question 1, this research question was also necessary to confirm from employees, the relevance of the employable skills indicated in literature. The response to this research question was solicited from the administrators of the heads of academic department who play key roles in administrative and managerial functions. It was measured on a 5-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine the degree to which they perceived the employable skills to be important. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of the responses given by the employees. A mean value below 3.00 indicated the employees attached a low level of importance to the employable skill whereas a mean above 3.00 indicated that the employees attached a high level of importance to the employable skill. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: *Employable skills employees perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.*

Rank	Employability skills	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	Written communication skill: ability to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing	64	4.78	.484
2	Oral communication skill: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking	64	4.72	.542
3	Interpersonal skill: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill	64	4.62	.599
4	Computer technology skill: ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry.	64	4.49	.680
5	Teamwork skill: ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	64	4.46	.679
6	Problem-solving skill: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	64	4.41	.717
7	Leadership skill: ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	64	4.24	.883
	Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation		4.53	.655

Source: Field data (2020)

Table 5 shows the level and rank of importance attached to each of the employable skills as indicated by employees. The written communication skill ( $M = 4.78, SD = .484$ ) was given the highest priority followed by oral communication skill ( $M = 4.72, SD = .542$ ), interpersonal skill ( $M = 4.62, SD = .599$ ), computer technology skill ( $M = 4.49, SD = .680$ ), team work skill ( $M = 4.46, SD = .679$ ) and problem-solving skill ( $M = 4.41, SD = .717$ ). The least important employable skill according to the employees was leadership skill ( $M = 4.24, SD = .883$ ). The mean of means and average standard deviation were 4.53 and .655 respectively.

The results shown in Tables 4 and 5 indicate that among the employable skills, written communication was ranked the highest by both supervisors and employees. It can be recalled in earlier discussions in Chapter 2 that, Moore and Morton (2017) indicated such topics that business students rate highly to include writing memos, letters, business reports and screen presentations. The results also agree with Martyn (2005) who made an assertion to the fact that the ability to communicate clearly in writing has been requested by employers repeatedly.

In like manner, Mascle (2013) as well as Towers-Clark (2015) indicated that employers have over time placed high value on those who have quality written communication skills. It can therefore be noted that assertions on the importance of written communication skills in early years for example, Bhatia and Hynes (1996) as already cited and that of those in recent years such as Mascle (2013), Towers-Clark (2015) and Moore and Morton (2017) have remained emphatically the same and have equally been supported by the results indicted in the Tables 4 and 5.



Following written communication skills, the results indicated that the second highest priority was given to oral communication skills by both supervisors and employees. The unanimity between both parties indicates the level of importance oral communication is to the success of management graduates in the workplace. As indicated by Omar, Bakar and Rashid (2012), oral communication is an essential competency expected of graduates in the workplace. It is a skill that is even required at entry level to be able to pay attention to instructions and provide feedback. The results of the study are also in agreement with CIHE (2008) who revealed that employers consider good oral communication skills to be an important requirement. Towers-Clark (2015) emphasized the need of oral communication and how it is required to express ideas with clarity and force. Garwood (2012) as well noted that oral communication is expedient for presenting ideas and especially motivating a group of employees who form a team.

The results indicated by both supervisors and employees in Tables 4 and 5 respectively support these assertions and indicate that in today's business world, oral communication is equally an essential employable skill for management graduates. To this effect, oral communication as well as written communication were both assessed on management students to determine their own perception on their level of competency.

Amongst the interpersonal, computer technology, teamwork and problem-solving skills, supervisors and employees ranked them differently. However, it was noted that the means of these skills by both supervisors and employees remained high with the employees' mean of problem-solving skill being the lowest at 4.41.

Teamwork skill although ranked differently by both supervisors and employees scored an equal mean of 4.46. The means of the interpersonal, computer technology, teamwork and problem-solving skills although vary, indicate that they are important to the success of management graduates in the workplace. These results authenticate what has been discussed in literature regarding the importance of the said skills.

A study by Awayiga, Onumah and Tsameny (2010), found that analytical and critical thinking which were traits of problem-solving skill were rated as one of the most important skill of professionalism by both graduates and employers. With regards to teamwork, the results of the study agreed with Brock et al. (2017), who indicated that the ability to participate in teamwork was often cited as a critical criterion for hiring. In terms of interpersonal skill, the findings of this study concurred with Chaturvedi, Yadav and Bajpai (2011) who noted that the soft skill of interpersonal relations is equally important to be considered a good manager. According to Workforce Development Agency, Singapore (2006), ICT skills as well has become integral among the graduate employable skills due to emerging globalization and digital technologies characterizing the business world today.

Just as both supervisors and employees commonly agreed on the most important skill to be written communication, they both agreed on the least important skill to be leadership skill. Although this skill scored a high mean of  $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = .724$  and  $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = .883$  by supervisors and employees respectively, it was the least scored. This result is in agreement with Hu and Liden (2011) who argued that the integration of leadership training in higher education curriculum has proven

to influence positively a student's potential of developing qualities of leadership. However, the importance of this skill does not seem to rise above the importance of other skills as indicated. This may be due to the fact that the exhibition of leadership qualities is more of a conceptual skill (Katz, 2009) and is not immediately required of management graduates at entry level positions but rather expected of them as they rise through the ranks.

The results shown in Tables 4 and 5 provide a firm basis to determine the employable skills that are relevant to the success of management graduates in the workplace. With a 5-point Likert scale with 1 (indicating not important) and 5 (indicating very important), the mean of means scores of all the employable skills by both supervisors (4.58) and employees (4.53) ranged between 4 and 5 indicating a high level of importance being attached to the employable skills. Additionally, to determine the uniformity in the level of importance attached to the employable skills by both supervisors and employees, a test was conducted to compare differences between the perceptions of the two groups. This test was hypothesized as Hypothesis 1.

**Hypothesis 1( $H_0$ ): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and employees regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.**

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the sample data was drawn from a normally distributed population. The test of normality is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: *Normality Test for supervisors' and employees' perception of the importance of employable skills*

Item	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Importance of employable skills	.887	136	.000

Source: Field data (2020)

The Sig value of .000 indicated that the distribution was not normal and therefore a non-parametric tool was appropriate to conduct the test. Based on the data, Mann-Whitney U test was chosen. The results of the test are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: *Differences Between Supervisors' and Employees' Perception on the Importance of Employable Skills.*

Status	M	IQ	U	Z	P
Supervisor	32	4.75	2281.500	-.135	.893
Employee	32	4.75			

$P > .05$

Source: Field data (2020)

Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare the level of importance attached to the employable skills by supervisors and employees. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference in supervisors' (median = 32.00, IQ = 4.75) and employees' (median = 32.00, IQ = 4.75) perception of importance attached to the employable skills,  $U = 2281.500$ ,  $p > 0.05$  (2 tailed). Hence, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. This means that the supervisors and employees had

no significant difference in their perceptions of the level of importance of the employable skills. The synergy in the perceptions of both supervisors and employees could be due to the experiences they gathered over the years regarding the skills involved in getting the work done.

The results in Tables 4, 5 and 7 indicate that the employable skills assessed by the supervisors and employees are satisfactory for use in assessing the level of employable skills of final year management students. These indications concur with Weligamage (2009), who asserted that the most important employable skills required by employers across different countries in Europe, the United States and Africa include team work skills, leadership skills, problem solving skills and working with diversity. Geel (2015), as well investigated the employability skills of undergraduate business management students. Among the skills that the researcher assessed were communication, problem solving and team work. These skills were the basic skills of employability which were considered important in the business environment. These skills were similar to those assessed by Epkoh (2015).

Having therefore established the importance of these skills, a total of 89 final year management students in School of Business were assessed to determine their level of employable skills. The employable skills confirmed by the supervisors and employees were used to assess the extent to which final year management students of the School of Business were prepared for the job market.

### **Demography of Management Students**

The management students were required to indicate some of their characteristics. The characteristics will provide understanding to readers as to the

nature of students who were involved in the study in relation to their gender, programme offered, level and age. The results of the characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: *Characteristics of management students*

Variable	Sub-Scale	N	%
Gender	Male	52	58.43
	Female	37	41.57
Programme	B.Com (Management)	89	100
	Others	0	0
Level	400	89	100
	Others	0	0
Age (in years)	20-28	81	91.01
	29 & above	8	8.99

Source: Field data (2020)

Table 8 shows the gender, programme, level and age of the management students. The male students dominated (58.43%) the study. As indicated in Table 8, only 37 of the respondents were female students representing 41.57%. The dominance of the male students in the study has been a usual phenomenon experienced in our educational settings. From time immemorial, males in Ghana have had the opportunities to enroll in educational institutions whilst more of their female counterparts remain at home. This is perceived to have been caused by how the formal traditional parents viewed the position of the girl child. Ultimately, more of the male students occupy positions in the world of work due to the increasing

number of male students graduating from educational institutions as compared to that of the female students.

With regards to the programme of study and level, all the student-respondents were management students and in their final year and therefore were expected to acquire some employable skills. The study was dominated by management students between the ages of 20-28 (91.01%) whereas 8.99% of the management students were above 29 years. This indicates that majority of the students started the programme not as mature students who perhaps may have had working experience prior to the beginning of the programme.

### **Main Results of Management Students**

To aid the students in recognizing the importance of the skills that they were being assessed on, there was a need to foremost find out their perception on the various employable skills. In determining their perception, the students were required to, in like manner as the supervisors and employees, rate the level of importance they attached to each of the employable skills on a 5-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine the degree to which they perceived the employable skills to be important. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of the responses given by the students. A mean value below 3.00 indicated the students attached a low level of importance to the employable skill whereas a mean above 3.00 indicated that the students attached a high level of importance to the employable skill. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: *Students' perception on the importance of the employable skills needed for their success at the workplace*

Rank	Employability skills	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	Oral communication skill: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking	89	4.18	1.040
2	Written communication skill: ability to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing	89	4.14	1.148
3	Interpersonal skill: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill	89	4.06	.940
4	Problem-solving skill: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	89	4.02	.976
5	Teamwork skill: ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	89	4.01	1.089
6	Leadership skill: ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	89	4.00	1.136
7	Computer technology skill: ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry.	89	3.80	.974
	Mean of means/Average Standard Deviation		4.03	1.043

Source: Field data (2020)



Table 9 shows the level and rank of importance attached to each of the employable skills as indicated by the students. The oral communication skill ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.040$ ) was given the highest priority followed by written communication skill ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 1.148$ ), interpersonal skill ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = .940$ ), problem solving skill ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = .976$ ), team work skill ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 1.089$ ) and leadership skill ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.136$ ). The least important employable skill according to the students was computer technology skill ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = .974$ ). The mean of means and average standard deviation were 4.03 and 1.043 respectively.

The results in Tables 4 and 9 indicate that whereas the supervisors were interested in written communication skills as the highest important skill, followed by oral communication skill, the students had an opposite perception by ranking oral communication skill as the highest, followed by written communication skill. Although this may appear to be less significant, it must be emphasized that the essence of business education is to prepare students for the job market. This result highlights Jackson's (2010) view which indicated that from a lecturer's point of view, it appears technological advances have led to a decline in the writing skill of graduates especially with the use of abbreviated English in texts and e-mails. This may be due to the fact that they attach less priority to written communication skill and higher priority to oral communication skill. The opposite views of the supervisors and students may indicate that whilst supervisors are more keen on written communication, students are more focused on developing oral communication skill over written communication skill. Again, the results show that

whereas supervisors rated computer technology skill over leadership skill, the students rated leadership as the sixth most important skill and computer technology skill as the least important skill. This also indicates that the students appear to have different perceptions than that of the supervisors. To confirm the disparity between the perceptions of supervisors and students, a test was conducted to compare differences between the perceptions of the two groups. This test was hypothesized as Hypothesis 2.

**Hypothesis 2(H<sub>0</sub>): There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and students regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.**

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the sample data was drawn from a normally distributed population. The test of normality is presented in Table 10.

Table 10: *Normality Test for supervisors' and students' perception of the importance of employable skills*

Item	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Importance of employable skills	.823	176	.000

Source: Field data (2020)

The Sig. value of .000 indicated that the distribution was not normal and therefore a non-parametric tool was appropriate to conduct the test. Based on the data, Mann-Whitney U test was chosen. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11: *Differences Between Supervisors' and Students' Perception on the Importance of the Employable Skills.*

Status	M	IQ	U	Z	<i>p</i>
Supervisor	32	4.75	2116.000	-4.762	.000
Student	29	3.00			

$P < .05$

Source: Field data (2020)

Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare the level of importance attached to the employable skills by supervisors and students. The results show that there is a statistically significant difference in supervisors' (median = 32.00, IQ = 4.75) and students' (median = 29.00, IQ = 3.00) perception of importance attached to the employable skills,  $U = 2116.000$ ,  $p < 0.05$  (2 tailed). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the supervisors and employees had different perceptions on the level of importance of the employable skills. The difference in perceptions between the supervisors and students may be due to the fact that the students were not likely to have been engaged fully in real world of work and therefore were not exposed to the relevant employable skills assessed by the researcher. It could also be due to the fact that the teaching strategies of the tutors placed less emphasis on the relevant employable skills assessed.

The students were further requested to determine the degree to which they believe these skills were integrated in the business curriculum throughout their period of study. This was to enable the researcher determine whether the students were able to identify traits of these employable skills they were being assessed on

throughout their period of study. The responses were determined on a 5-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (not integrated) to 5 (fully integrated). A mean score below 3.00 indicated that the employable skill had a low level of integration whereas a mean above 3.00 indicated that the skill had a high integration. The results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: *Students' perception of the extent of integration of the employable skills throughout the business curriculum*

Rank	Employability skills	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
1	Oral communication skill: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking	89	4.26	.825
2	Written communication skill: ability to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing	89	4.11	1.147
3	Teamwork skill: ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	89	4.05	.894
4	Problem-solving skill: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	89	4.01	.941
5	Leadership skill: ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	89	3.95	1.076
6	Interpersonal skill: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill	89	3.79	1.088

Table 12 Continued

7	Computer technology skill: ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry.	89	3.62	1.073
	Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation		3.97	1.006

Source: Field data (2020)

The results shown in Table 12 brings to bare the rate at which the students believe the employable skills that have been stated in literature and confirmed by supervisors and employees have been incorporated in the business curriculum. As seen in the Table (12), the students believed that the inculcation of oral communication skill ( $M = 4.26, SD = .825$ ) was the highest skill that was evidenced in the business curriculum. This according to the students indicated that the training of the management student for their future career was more on oral communication skill than any of the other employable skills. This was followed by written communication skill ( $M = 4.11, SD = 1.147$ ) and the least skill to be computer technology skill ( $M = 3.62, SD = 1.073$ ). The mean of means score (3.97) of their responses showed that although the students perceived that each of employable skills were not fully integrated in the business curriculum, they perceived the employable skills had a high rate of integration. The relationship between institutions of higher learning and employability is a recurring subject of discussion in academia. Government and employers have over time placed increasing pressure on higher educational institutions to train students who will turn out to be

employable such that they possess the relevant and adequate knowledge, skills and attitude to succeed on the job.

Consensus theory researchers argue that the introduction of universal competencies at universities will promote the employability of graduates and assist them in subsequent progress in the corporate world (Selvadurai, Choy & Maros, 2012). This theory further argues that the improvement of established abilities at institutions of higher learning will promote the employability of graduates and help them to function on the job. Universities need to enhance the acquisition of employable skills by integrating the development of standard capabilities into university curricula (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Suleman, 2018). Therefore, the proponents of the consensus theory assert that with a high level of skills integration in the curriculum the students stand a high chance of acquiring the relevant employable skills at the end of their higher education.

The ranking of the skills in Table 12 was a similar indication in Table 9 regarding the level of importance the students attached to the employable skill with oral communication being the highest skill, followed by written communication skill and computer technology skill being the least. Perhaps, it could be that the extent to which they believe these three skills were integrated in the business curriculum informed their perception of the level of importance attached to each of the employable skills. The relationship between the rate at which they believe each of the employable skills were integrated and the rate at which they perceive each of the skills to be important is an area that can further be explored. However, having established their perception on the importance of the employable skills and their

perception on the rate of their integration in the business curriculum, the students were then requested to rate their self-perceived level of possession of each of the employable skills. This assessment was necessary to determine research question 3. The results are presented in Table 13.

**Research Question 3: What is the students’ self-perceived level of employable skills?**

The responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating no level of possession and 5 being the highest level of possession. It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine the degree to which they perceived themselves to possess the employable skills. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of the responses given by the students. A mean value below 3.00 indicated the students possesses low level of the employable skill whereas a mean above 3.00 indicated that the students possessed a high level of the skill.

Table 13: *Students’ self-perceived level of possession of the employable skills*

Rank	Employability skills	N	Std.	
			Mean (M)	Deviation (SD)
1	Oral communication skill: ability to clearly express one’s thoughts, information and messages in speaking	89	4.28	.905
2	Written communication skill: ability to express effectively one’s thoughts, information and messages in writing	89	4.23	1.064

Table 13, Continued

3	Leadership skill: ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	89	4.18	.975
4	Problem-solving skill: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	89	4.16	.763
5	Teamwork skill: ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	89	3.99	.859
6	Interpersonal skill: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill	89	3.97	1.000
7	Computer technology skill: ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry.	89	3.80	1.030
	Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation		4.09	.942

Source: Field data (2020)

The results shown in Table 13 reveal the level at which the students perceived themselves to possess the employable skills that have been stated in literature and confirmed by supervisors and employees. As seen in the table (12), the students perceived that oral communication skill ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = .905$ ) was the highest skill that they possessed. This result suggests that the training of the management student for their future career was more on oral communication skill than any of the other employable skills. This was followed by written



communication skill ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 1.064$ ), leadership skill ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .975$ ), problem-solving skill ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = .763$ ), teamwork skill ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = .859$ ), interpersonal skill ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 1.000$ ) and the least skill to be computer technology skill ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 1.030$ ). The mean of means and average standard deviation were 4.09 and .942 respectively.

The study found that among the top seven skills that were assessed on the final year management students, the ability to clearly express their thoughts, information and messages in speaking was the highest skill possessed by the students than any of the other employable skills. This was followed by the ability to express clearly their thoughts, information and messages in writing. The ability to speak and write clearly has been found to be among the top skills required by supervisors. Ekpoh (2015), indicated that communication skill was significantly higher among students than any other employable skill. Castillo (2014) measured communication skills among graduating business and accounting students of Batangas State University in Philippines where the students measured above average.

These studies by Ekpoh (2015) and Castillo (2014) support the fact that among business students, the level of communication skills is significantly high. However, upon analyzing what has been indicated by supervisors as the most important employable skill for management students, it appears there is a mismatch. Whereas supervisors prioritize written communication skill over oral communication skills, the students perceived themselves as possessing a higher level of oral communication skill over written communication skill. Hence, higher

education institutions must take note of this issue as it can create a negative impact on the management students' chances to compete in the competitive job market.

The results in Table 13 also show that, the management students indicated that following communication skills, they possessed a high level of ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction. Leadership skill seems very important but not as the third most important skill. According to the supervisors, although leadership skill was equally important, it was ranked as the least important skill among the seven skills. This was also confirmed by the employees. Jovinia, Ab Rahim and Shamsiah (2014) in a similar study confirmed that whereas leadership skill is important it was not among the highest skills that influenced graduate employability.

The indication by the students that the next skill they perceived to possess after communication skills was leadership skills suggest a critical gap between expectations of employers and competency of the students. This critical gap was emphasized by Geel (2015) who stated that management students are not fully equipped to demonstrate the employability skills expected by employers and as well suggested that close relationships be established between institutions of higher learning and private sector to enhance employability of management graduates. It must however be emphasized that this critical gap stems not from the level of possession of leadership skill by the management students but from misplaced priority.

The fourth highest possessed skill indicated by the student was ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution.

Just like the supervisors, Weligamage (2009) and Nesaratnam, Karan and Von (2018) affirmed that problem solving skills was critical for the success of management graduates. However, Orji (2013), concluded that students possessed low level of competency in problem solving. Nonetheless, the results in Tables 4 and 13 show that whereas the supervisors ranked it as the third most important skill, the management students as well perceived it to be one of the first four employable skills they highly possessed. Following this, the students ranked the ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background and the ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill as the fifth and sixth skills respectively that they possessed. The least possessed skill that was ranked by the students was the ability to use computers to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business or industry.

Buarki, Hepworth and Murray (2011) stated that the ability to demonstrate computer technology enables organizations to operate more efficiently, so employing staff with ICT skills is vital for the smooth running of any business. In Table 4, the supervisors ranked computer technology skill as the fourth most important skill. This supports the assertion that indeed computer technology is critical to the success of management graduates. However, in Table 13, the management students indicated that their least possessed skill was computer technology.

Generally, the management students perceived themselves to possess a high level of employable skills. This was supported by the mean of means score of 4.09. With oral communication skills recording the highest mean ( $M = 4.28, SD = .905$ )

and computer technology skill recording the lowest mean ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 1.030$ ), the level of possession of each of the seven skills was above average. This study therefore revealed that the management students perceived themselves to possess the necessary employable skills and supported the studies conducted by Ekpoh (2015) and Castillo (2014) that the level of employable skills among students and fresh graduates is significantly high. The study however contradicted the conclusion drawn by Geel (2015).

The human capital theory (Schultz, 1961; Becker 2009) argues that the productivity of an individual is increased by the level of education of that individual and this enhances job performance subsequently. 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. It is therefore expected that as student go through education at the higher level, they ought to be able to acquire and possess the needed attributes that will assist them with increased chances of employability and productivity. The results of the study clearly indicate that their level of education has provided them with the opportunity to acquire the needed employable skills. Although the students may not have fully acquired the employable skills, their high level of possession as a result of their higher education offers them a high potential to compete successfully in the labour market.

Abas and Imam (2016) stated that graduates could gain due advantage in their place of work if they possess competence in employability skills. Thus, effort must be geared towards developing competence in employability skills by

supervisors, higher academic institutions, labor agencies, and policy makers. However, a critical look at the levels of possession in this study (Table 13) further revealed that although they possess the essential skills necessary for employment, there was a difference between the priorities of supervisors and the ranking of possession by the students. This difference becomes critical as supervisors focus on not just demanding that management graduates possess the employable skills but do so in order of priority.

Assessing the level of employable skills of the students necessitated the need to identify the teaching methods that were employed by lecturers in course content delivery. As stated by Kolb and Kolb (2009), most time in management classes is spent just conveying information with relatively little time spent on more effective teaching strategies. This necessitated research question 4.

**Research question 4: What teaching strategies do students perceive are applied by the lecturers to enhance the acquisition of the employable skills?**

It was also measured on a 5-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (not applied) to 5 (fully applied). It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine the degree to the teaching methods were applied by the lecturers. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of the responses given by the students. A mean value below 3.00 indicated the students perceived a low level of application of the teaching method and above 3.00 indicated a high level of application of the teaching method. The results are presented in Table 14.

Table 14: *Teaching strategies students perceive are applied by the lecturers to enhance the acquisition of the employable skills*

Rank	Teaching Strategies	N	Std.	
			Mean (M)	Deviation (SD)
1	Students are encouraged to work in groups	89	3.94	1.186
2	The traditional lecture method	89	3.82	1.040
3	Individual presentations by students	89	3.82	1.040
4	Case-base instruction (case studies)	89	3.51	1.063
5	Business simulation with computers	89	3.26	.941
6	Internship experiences	89	3.21	1.094
Mean of means/Average Standard Deviation of experiential learning strategies			3.53	1.095

Source: Field data (2020).

From the results in Table 14, the students indicated that the most applied teaching strategy was group work where students were encouraged to work in groups ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.186$ ). This teaching strategy was followed by the traditional lecture method ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 1.040$ ) where students were more of recipients of presentation by lecturers. The third most applied teaching method was individual presentations by students ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 1.191$ ) followed by the use of case studies ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 1.063$ ), business simulation with computers ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .941$ ) where students were encouraged to have a hands-on, interactive learning experiences in the classroom with the aid of computers. The least applied teaching strategy was internship experiences ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 1.094$ ). The mean of

means and average standard deviation of experiential learning strategies were 3.53 and 1.095 respectively.

Branford, Brown and Cocking (2000) postulated that in recent times, higher education has directed focus on enhancing the learning process in education through “the new science of learning”. One major aspect of the new science of learning is experiential learning. Experiential learning strategies include internships, management simulation, role-playing, structured experiential and case analyses and these are the approaches that advocate for the teaching of business courses (Henry, Hill & Leitch, 2005). Consensus theory does not hold universities responsible for merely including employable skills in the curricula but also for introducing strategic pedagogical techniques to enhance the development of those skills among students (Selvadurai et al., 2012).

Pedagogical strategies most probably appropriate for developing widespread skills may include learning that is situated, problem based or one that involves active discovery. Learning that is situated involves aiding students to develop an active process of learning and not being just a passive recipient of knowledge whereas learning that is problem based entails helping students acquire knowledge from practical experiences as well as generating solutions to challenging problems that are likely to occur (Wongnaa & Boachie, 2018).

From the results in Table 14, the students indicated that excluding students being encouraged to work in groups which was ranked the highest, the traditional lecture method was more applied than any of the other experiential learning strategies. The mean scores of the results as shown in the Table (13) also indicated

that the teaching strategies were not fully applied however, they were slightly above average as indicated by the mean of means score of 3.53. This affirms the assertion by Kolb and Kolb (2009) that in most cases, teaching hours in management classes were spent more on just conveying information by the lecturer to the students and relatively little time spent on more effective teaching strategies. By this, the students become inactive in the classroom rather than active participants. The continuous practice of ineffective teaching strategies has the tendency of eventually widening further the gap between employer expectation and the skill sets of management graduates.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter analysed the results of the study according to the research questions and hypotheses. The study found out how supervisors, employees and students regarded skills such as written and oral communication, interpersonal, computer technology, team work, problem solving and leadership as essential employable skills necessary for the management students to be competitive in the job market. The views of the supervisors were not significantly different from that of the employees. However, the study found that, the supervisors and students had significant different perceptions on the level of importance attached to employable skills needed for the success of management graduates. This difference in perception may likely be due to the skills that are emphasized in the business curriculum as well as lack of adequate work experience of students. This has a potential of affecting the preparedness of management students for the job market.



The students were further requested to rate the degree to which they perceived those employable skills were integrated throughout the business curriculum. It was found out that whereas the supervisors and employees emphasized the importance of written communication over oral communication, the students ranked oral communication as the highest integrated skill followed by written communication. It also found that whereas the supervisors and employees ranked leadership skill as the least important skill, the students ranked leadership as the fifth most integrated skill in the business curriculum with computer technology as the least integrated skill. The mismatch between the rate of importance of the employable skills by the supervisors and the extent to which they were integrated throughout the business curriculum as indicated by the students is an issue that needs to be looked at critically by institutions of higher education to further enhance the preparedness of management students for the job market.

The students were again assessed to find out their perception on the level of acquisition of those employable skills. The study showed that the students ranked themselves to have possessed the employable skills first in oral communication followed by written communication, leadership, problem-solving, teamwork, interpersonal and lastly computer technology skill. Although the mean scores indicated that their level of possession was high, the order of levels differed from the priorities of the supervisors. Lastly, the students were also requested to rate the degree to which effective teaching strategies were employed in facilitating the acquisition of the employable skills. The study revealed that students were encouraged to work in groups. However, the traditional lecture method was often

used than any of the other effective teaching strategies. This indicated that the lecturers may not have been fully applying experiential learning strategies to facilitate students' acquisition of the employable skills.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the overview of the study and indicated the conclusions drawn from the detailed discussion. It also outlines the recommendations made by the researcher. The chapter was organized as follows: summary of the study, key findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

#### Summary of the Study

This study sought to assess the level of employable skills of final year management students in the University of Cape Coast. The purpose of this study was to find out whether the management students were able to acquire relevant employable skills by the end of their study and the degree to which they were able to do so. To do this, a number of research questions and hypotheses were outlined to guide the study. The research questions were:

1. What employable skills do supervisors perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace?
2. What employable skills do employees perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace?
3. What is the students' self-perceived level of employable skills needed for the success of administrators at the workplace?

4. What teaching strategies do students perceive are applied by lecturers to enhance the acquisition of the employable skills needed for the success of administrators at the workplace?

The research hypotheses were as follows:

### **Research Hypotheses**

#### Hypothesis 1

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and employees regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.

#### Hypothesis 2

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistically significant difference in the perceptions of supervisors and students regarding the employable skills they perceive to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.

A descriptive survey research design was employed to address the research questions and hypotheses. A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to identify the sample frame. The study sought responses from 64 heads of department, 64 administrators and 89 final year management students in the School of Business all in the University of Cape Coast. The heads of department and administrators, as a result of their managerial and secretarial functions, were requested to determine the employable skills that they perceive were important for the success of administrators in the workplace. This was done by administering copies of a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to the respondents. These responses

were necessary to identify the employable skills that were relevant for assessing the students.

The students as well were requested to respond to items on a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire that measured the degree to which they perceived the employable skills to be important, the degree to which they perceived those employable skills were integrated throughout the business curriculum, the degree to which they perceived themselves to possess those skills and the teaching strategies they perceived were employed by their lecturers. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. Specifically, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse research questions one, two, three and four. Mann-U test was used to analyse research hypotheses one and two.

### **Key Findings**

The following key findings were obtained after a detailed discussion of the results:

1. The study found that supervisors attached importance to the employable skills ranking written communication as the most important followed by oral communication, problem-solving, interpersonal, computer technology, teamwork and lastly leadership skill.
2. The study also found that employees attached importance to the employable skills ranking written communication as the most important followed by oral communication, interpersonal, computer technology, teamwork, problem-solving and lastly leadership skill.
3. There was no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of supervisors and employees regarding the employable skills they

perceived to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.

4. There was a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of supervisors and students regarding the employable skills they perceived to be important for the success of administrators at the workplace.
5. Generally, the management students indicated a level of possession of employable skills above average indicating a high level. Oral communication was ranked the highest possessed skill, followed by written communication, leadership, problem-solving, teamwork, interpersonal and lastly computer technology.
6. The study found that experiential learning strategies that enhanced acquisition of employable skills by students were not fully applied by the lecturers. Students were mostly passive participants in class as the lecturers applied more of the traditional lecture method in teaching.

### **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn after a detailed discussion of the results:

1. The possession of employable skills such as written and oral communication skill, problem solving skill, interpersonal skill, teamwork skill, computer technology skill and leadership skill by management graduates is deemed very necessary to remain competitive in the job market and to stay in employment.

2. Both supervisors and employees had similar perceptions regarding the employable skills that are important for the success of administrators at the workplace.
3. The management students and supervisors had different perceptions regarding the employable skills that are most important for the success of administrators in the workplace.
4. The management students perceived themselves as not fully possessing the employable skills needed to succeed as administrators at the workplace however, they had a relatively high level of employable skills.
5. The traditional lecture method was used by the lecturers more often in their management classes rather than experiential learning strategies.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study suggested some critical actions which must be taken to more fully align management education and management practice. Owing to these findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Management students ought to effectively develop the skill of written communication as it is very essential to their success at the workplace.
2. Lecturers in the department of management studies should more fully emphasize the importance of relevant employable skills in their course content. An emphasis on the learning objectives to students in each topic taught in class and particularly the relevant employable skill which

ought to be developed by end of the lesson will assist the students in identifying the employable skills demanded of them by employers.

3. Lecturers in the department of management studies should employ various appropriate teaching methods needed to facilitate students' acquisition of each relevant employable skill. The training of students to develop employable skills has been proven to be more effective by using teaching methods such business simulation, case-base instructions and graded industrial training.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The study employed a quantitative approach to assess the level of employable skills of management students in University of Cape Coast. It is therefore suggested that future research could be focused on:

1. assessment of employable skills of all business students in University of Cape Coast.
2. using a mixed method approach in assessing the employable skills of management students in University of Cape Coast.
3. content analysis of the management curriculum.
4. relationship between experiential learning strategies and students' acquisition of employable skills.



## REFERENCES

- Abas, M. C., & Imam, O. A. (2016). Graduates' competence on employability Skills and job performance. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 5(2), 119-125.
- Abdullahi, A. (2002). Business education, technology and national development. *Book of reading in Business education*, 1(2), 1-5.
- Adcroft, A., Willis, R., & Dhaliwal, S. (2004). Missing the point? Management education and entrepreneurship. *Management Decision*, 42(3), 521-530.
- Agrawal, V. (2012). Managing the diversified team: challenges and strategies for improving performance. *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, 18(7), 384-400
- Agwu, M. O. (2015). Teamwork and employee performance in the bonny Nigeria liquefied natural gas plant. *Strategic Management Quarterly*, 3(4), 39-60.
- Ahles, C. B., & Bosworth, C. C. (2004). The perception and reality of student and workplace teams. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 59(1), 41-59.
- Ajisafe, O. E., Bolarinwa, K. O., & Tuke, E. (2015). Issues in business education programme: Challenges to national transformation. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(21), 208-212.
- Akpor-Robaro, M.O.M. (2018). Problems and challenges of management practice in emerging economies: An explanatory commentary on African context with emphasis on Nigeria. *Khartoum University Journal of Management Studies*, 11(2), 15-23.

- Aliaga, & Gunderson. (2002). *Interactive statistics* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed). United States: Prentice Hall.
- Aliyu, M. M. (2013). *Subject method for business teachers*. Kaduna: Sunjo A.J. Global Limited.
- Aliyu, A. A., Bello, M. U., Kasim, R., & Martin, D. (2014). Positivist and non-positivist paradigm in social science research: Conflicting paradigms or perfect partners. *J. Mgmt. & Sustainability*, 4, 79.
- Analoui, F., & Hosseini, M. H. (2001). Management education and increased managerial effectiveness. *Journal of Management Development*, 20(9), 785-794.
- AQU, (2015). *Employers' perceptions of the employability and skills of recent graduates in Catalonia: Main findings of the AQU Catalunya Employers Survey 2014*. Barcelona, Spain: AQU.
- Asonitou, S. (2015). Barriers to the teaching of skills in the Greek higher education accounting courses: insight from accounting teachers. *International Journal of Strategic Innovative Marketing*, 2(3), 14-26.
- Audibert, G., & Jones, M. (2002). The impact of a changing economy on GEN X job seekers. *USA Today Magazine*, 130(2682), 20-21.
- Awayiga, J. Y., Onumah, J. M. & Tsameny, M. (2010). Knowledge and skills development of accounting graduates: The perceptions of graduates and employers in Ghana. Accounting Education. *An International Journal*, 19(1-2), 139-158.
- Baah-Boateng, W., & Twum, E. K. (2020). Insufficient exposure to actual world of

work impedes graduates' employability: The case of Ghana. *Africa in Focus*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in->

Baker, T.L. (1994), *Doing Social Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill Inc.

Beck, U. (2018). *What is globalization?* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Becker, G. S. (2009). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. University of Chicago press.

Belzer, K. D., D'Zurilla, T. J., & Maydeu-Olivares, A. (2002). Social problem solving and trait anxiety as predictors of worry in a college student population. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 33(4), 573-585.

Benjamin, B., & O'reilly, C. (2011). Becoming a leader: Early career challenges faced by MBA graduates. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 10(3), 452-472.

Bennett, D. (2016). *Keynote Address for WIL 2020: Pushing the Boundaries. Paper read at 2016 National Conference of the Australian Collaborative Education Network. Breaking open WIL: Preparing students for 2020 and beyond*: Macquarie University, Sydney, September 28–30.

Berntson, E. (2008). *Employability perceptions: nature, determinants and implications for health and well-being*, doctoral dissertation, Department of Psychology, Stockholm: Stockholm University.

Bhatia, G. & Hynes, V. (1996). Graduate business students' preferences for the Managerial communication course curriculum. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 59(2), 45-55.

- Boateng, K., & Ofori-Sarpong, E. (2002). An analytical study of the labour market for tertiary graduates in Ghana. *World Bank/National Council for Tertiary Education and National Accreditation Board Project Report*, 278200-1099079877269.
- Boden, R., & Nedeva, M. (2010). Employing discourse: universities and graduate 'employability'. *Journal of Education Policy*, 25(1), 37-54
- Bok, D. (2009). *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More-New Edition*, 50. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.). (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington, DC: National Research Council.
- Braun, N. M. (2004). Critical thinking in the business curriculum. *Journal of Education for Business*, 79, 232-236.
- Brock, S. E., McAliney, P. J., Ma, C. H., & Sen, A. (2017). Toward more practical measurement of teamwork skills. *Journal of workplace learning*, 29(2), 124-133.
- Brownell, J. & Chung, B. G. (2001). The management development program: A competency-based model for preparing hospitality leaders. *Journal of Management Education*, 25, 124-145.
- Buarki, H., Hepworth, M., & Murray, I. (2011). *ICT skills and employability needs at the LIS programme*, Kuwait: a literature review: New Library World.
- Castillo, R. C. (2014). Employability skills of graduating business and accounting

students of Batangas State University. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research*, 13(1), 303-315.

Chaturvedi. A., Yadav. A. K., & Bajpai. S. (2011). Communicative Approach to Soft & Hard Skills. *VSRD-IJBMR*, 1(1). 1-6.

Chiu, K. K., Mahat, N. I., Rashid, B., Razak, N. A., & Omar, H. (2016). Assessing students' knowledge and soft skills competency in the industrial training programme: The employers' perspective. *Rev. Eur. Stud.*, 8(1), 123.

Chung-Herrera, B. G., Enz, C. A., & Lankau, M. J. (2003). Grooming future hospitality leaders: A competencies model. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 44(3), 17-25.

Clarke, M. (2017). Rethinking graduate employability: The role of capital, individual attributes and context. *Studies in Higher Education*, doi: 10.890/03075079.2017.1294152

Collins A., & Robertson M. (2003). The entrepreneurial summer school as a successful model for teaching enterprise. *Education & Training* 45(6), 324-330.

Confederation of British Industry (2009). *Future fit: preparing graduates for the world of work*. London: Confederation of British Industry Higher Education Task Force. London: Author

Council for Industry and Higher Education (2008). *Graduate Employability: What do Employers Think and Want?* (W. Archer and J. Davison, Eds). London: Author.

Crayford, J. Fearon, C. McLaughlin, H., & Van Vuuren, W. (2012). Affirming

entrepreneurial education: learning, employability and personal development, *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 44(4), 187–193.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. London: SAGE publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2005). Mixed methods research: Developments, debates, and dilemmas. *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods of inquiry*, 315-326.

Cummings, J. (2010). Contextualised performance: reframing the skills debate in research education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(4), 405-419

Curry, P., Sherry, R., & Tunney, O. (2003). *What Transferable Skills do Employers Look for in Third-Level Graduates? Results of Employer Survey Summary Report*. Dublin: University of Dublin Trinity College.

Dabalén, A., Oni, B., & Adekola, O. A. (2001). Labor market prospects for university graduates in Nigeria. *Higher Education Policy*, 14(2), 141-159.

Damoah, O. B. O., Peprah, A. A., & Brefo, K. O. (2021). Does higher education equip graduate students with the employability skills employers require? The perceptions of employers in Ghana. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 1-14.

Dania, J., Bakar, A. R., & Mohamed, S. (2014). Factors influencing the acquisition of employability skills by students of selected Technical Secondary School in Malaysia. *International Education Studies*, 7(2), 117-124.

DEST (2002), *Employability skills for the future. A report by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia*

- for the Department of Education, Science and Training. Canberra: Author
- DeKeyser, R. (2007). Skill acquisition theory. *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction*, 97113.
- Denscombe, M. (2008). Communities of practice: A research paradigm for the mixed methods approach. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 2(3), 270-283.
- Dewey, J. (1897). My pedagogic creed. *The School Journal*, 54(3), 77-80.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Duncan, W. J. (1974). Transferring management theory to practice. *Academy of Management Journal*, 17(4), 724-738.
- Egulu, L. 2004. The African perspective on youth unemployment. In Demaret, L. (ed.), *Policy proposals for decent work and employment for young people*, 77-85. Geneva: ILO.
- Ekpoh, U. (2015). *Assessing students' employability skills in Universities in South-South Nigeria. Proceedings from 8th International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation*. Seville, Spain: Research Gate
- Fallows, S., & Steven, C. (2000). Building employability skills into the higher education curriculum: a university-wide initiative. *Education+ training*, 42(2). 75–83.
- Fiet, J. O. (2001). The pedagogical side of entrepreneurship theory. *Journal of business venturing*, 16(2), 101-117.
- Financial Services Skills Council (2007). *The skills bill: Analysis of skills needs in UK financial services*. London: Author.

Fox, T. (2001). A sense of place. *Caterer and Hotelkeeper*, 189(4160), 30-31.

Fraenkel, J.R. & Wallen, N.E. (2000). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fulcher, M. (2012). *Architecture student salary expectations 20% above reality.*

*The Architects' Journal. Retrieved from:*

<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/home/architecture-student-salary-expectations-20-above-reality/8632366.article>

Garsten, C. & Jacobsson, K. (2003). *Learning to be employable: an introduction in: C. Garsten, & K. Jacobsson (Eds) Learning to be employable: new agendas on work, responsibility and learning in a globalizing world.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Garwood, R. (2012). Supporting the underperforming manager: Teaching the soft skills that can make all the difference. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 20(1), 39-42.

Geel, M. (2015). *An investigation into the employability skills of undergraduate Business Management students* (Doctoral dissertation).

Gibb, A. 2008. Entrepreneurship and enterprise education in schools and colleges: insights from UK practice. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*. 6(2). 1-48.

Gill, A., & Lashine, S. (2003). Business education: a strategic market-oriented focus. *International Journal of Educational Management*. 17(5), 188-194.

Gokuladas, V. K. (2010). Technical and Non-Technical Education and the employability of engineering graduates: An Indian Case Study.



*International Journal of Training & Development*, 14(2), 130-143.

Ghoshal, S. (2005). Bad management theories are destroying good management practices. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4(1), 75-91.

Gracia, L. (2009). Employability and higher education: contextualising female students' workplace experiences to enhance understanding of employability development. *Journal of Education and Work*, 22(1). 301-318.

Hambrick, D. C. (2007). The field of management's devotion to theory: Too much of a good thing? *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(6), 1346-1352.

Harvey, L., Moon, S. & Geall, V. (1997). *Graduates' Work: organisational change and student' attributes*. Birmingham: Centre for research into quality, University of Central England.

Hawkins, P. (1999). *Employability Initiative*. [www.wmployability.ed.ac.uk/What/](http://www.wmployability.ed.ac.uk/What/)

Hayes, J. (2002) *Interpersonal Skills at Work*. New York: Routledge.

Heilman, M. E. (2012). Gender stereotypes and workplace bias. *Research in Organisational Behavior*, 32(1), 113–135.

Henry, C., Hill, F., & Leitch, C. (2005). Entrepreneurship Education and Training: Can Entrepreneurship Be Taught? Part 1, *Education and Training* 47(2). 98-111.

Hillage, J. & Pollard, E. (1998). *Employability: Developing a framework for policy analysis*. London: DfEE

Hoe, P., & Jangwan, K. (2016). Relationship between collaborative self-efficacy and problem-solving skills of university students: Mediating effect of

communication skills. *Journal of Educational Innovation Research*, 26(1), 169-192.

Hu, J., & Liden, R. (2011). Antecedents of team potency and team effectiveness: An examination of goal and process clarity and servant leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(4), 851-862.

Hynes, B. (1996). Entrepreneurship education and training-introducing entrepreneurship into non-business disciplines. *Journal of European industrial training*, 20(8), 10-17.

Institute of Directors (2007). *Institute of Directors skills briefing - December 2007: Graduates' employability skills*. London: Author.

Isaac, S., & Michael, W. B. (1997). *Handbook in research and evaluation: A collection of principle, methods and strategies useful in the planning, design, and evaluation of studies in education and the behavioral sciences*. San Diego, CA: Ed

Jackson, D., & Chapman, E. (2012). Non-technical skill gaps in Australian business graduates. *Education+ Training*, 54(2), 95–113.

Jackson, D. 2010. An international profile of industry-relevant competencies and skill gaps in modern graduates. *International Journal of Management Education*, 8(3), 29–58.

James, S., Warhurst, C., Tholen, G., & Commander, J. (2013). What we know and what we need to know about graduate skills. *Work, employment and society*, 27(6), 952-963.

Jovinia, D., Ab Rahim, B. & Shmsiah, M. (2014). Factors influencing the

acquisition of employability skills by students of selected Technical Secondary School in Malaysia. *International Education Studies*, 7(2), 117-124

Ju, S., Zhang, D., & Pacha, J. (2012). Employability skills valued by employers as important for entry-level employees with and without disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 35(1), 29-38.

Kaboub, F. (2008). Positivist paradigm. *Encyclopaedia of counselling*, 2(2), 343.

Katz, R. L. (2009). *Skills of an effective administrator*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Keeling, R. (2006). The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Research Agenda: The European Commission's expanding role in higher education discourse. *European journal of education*, 41(2), 203-223.

Keeton, M. T., Sheckley, B. G., & Griggs, J. K. (2002). *Efficiency and effectiveness in higher education*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2009). Experiential learning theory: A dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education and development. *The SAGE handbook of management learning, education and development*, 42, 68.

Kraemer, K. L. (1991). *The information systems research challenge: survey research methods*.

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and psychological measurement*, 30(3), 607-610.

Krishnan, V. R. (2008). Impact of MBA education on students' values: Two

- longitudinal studies. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 83(2), 233-246.
- Lameck, W. U. (2013). Sampling design, validity and reliability in general social survey. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 3(7), 212.
- Leedy, P. D. & Ormrod, J. E. (2013). The nature of tools and research. *Practical research: Planning and design 1*, 1-26.
- Lees, D. (2002). *Graduate employability-literature review*. York: LTSN Generic Centre.
- Ley, T. & Albert, D. (2003). Identifying employee competencies in dynamic works domains: methodological consideration and a case study. *J. UCS*, 9(12), 1500-1518
- Levhari, D., & Weiss, Y. (1974). The effect of risk on the investment in human capital. *The American Economic Review*, 64(6), 950-963.
- Levy, P. S., & Lemeshow, S. (1999). *Sampling of Populations: Methods and applications* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Lewis, A 1999. *Past and present perceptions surrounding mission education: A historical meta bletical overview*. DEd dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch.
- Lichtman, M. (2013). *Qualitative research for the social sciences*. London: SAGE publications.
- Lisa, E., Henelova, K. & Newman, D (2019). Comparison between employers' and students' expectations in respect of employability skills of university graduates. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 20(1), 71-82

- Livanos, I. (2010). The relationship between higher education and labour market in Greece: the weakest link?. *Higher Education*, 60(5), 473-489.
- Lok, P., & Crawford, J. (2004). The effect of organisational culture and leadership style on job satisfaction and organisational commitment. *Journal of Management Development*, 23(4), 321-338.
- Low, M., Botes, V., Dela Rue, D., & Allen, J. (2016). Accounting employers' expectations - the ideal accounting graduates. *The E - Journal of Business Education & Scholarship of Teaching*, 10(1), 36-57.
- Maes, J. D., Weldy, T. G., & Icenogle, M. L. (1997). A managerial perspective: oral communication competency is most important for business students in the workplace. *Journal of Business Communication*, 34(1), 67-80.
- Mallick, D. N. & Chaudhury, A. (2000). Technology management education in MBA programs: a comparative study of knowledge and skill requirements. *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*, 17(2), 153-173
- Masclé, D. D. (2013). Writing self-efficacy and written communication skills. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 76(2), 216-225.
- Martyn, M. A. (2005). Using interaction in online discussion boards. *Educause Quarterly*, 28(4), 61.
- McIlveen, Peter. (2018). Defining employability for the new era of work: A submission to The Senate Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers. 10.13140/RG.2.2.23333.60646.
- McLaughlin, M. (1995). Employability skills profile. *What are employers looking*

*for? Greensboro*, North Carolina: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services

Merrifield, K. A. (2013). *Do 'employability skills' matter? How important are employability skills to teachers, young people and employers today?* (Doctoral dissertation, University of York).

Messum, D., Wilkes, L., Peters, C., & Jackson, D. (2017). Senior managers' and recent graduates' perceptions of employability skills for health services management. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, Special Issue, 18(2)*, 115-128

Miller, L., Biggart, A., & Newton, B. (2013). Basic and employability skills. *International Journal of Training and Development, 3(17)*, 173-175.

Mintzberg, H. (2003). *Managers, not MBAs: A hard look at the soft practice of managing and management development*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Moore, T., & Morton, J. (2017). The myth of job readiness? Written communication, employability, and the 'skills gap' in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 42(3)*, 591-609.

Morley, L. (2001). Producing new workers: Quality, equality and employability in higher education. *Quality in Higher Education 7(2)*, 150-162.

Muijs, D. (2004). Validity, reliability and generalizability. *Doing quantitative research in education with SPSS*, 64-84.

Muyako, S., & Seedwell T. (2015). Quality in accounting graduates: employer expectations of the graduate skills in the Bachelor of Accounting degree. *European Scientific Journal, 11(22)*, 165-180

- National Association of College Education United Kingdom. (2009). *Job Outlook 2009 Study*. London: Ministry of Education UK. Retrieved from <http://www.naceweb.org/press/display.asp?year=2009&prid=295>
- Naveed, T. A., Jabeen, T., & Ullah, S. (2014). An appraisal of mismatch between employers' expectations and graduating students' perception about employability skills: A case study of Gujrat (Pakistan). *The Pakistan Journal of Social Issues*, 5(1), 88-109
- Nduro, K., Anderson, I. K., Pephrah, J. A., & Twenefour, F. B. (2015). Industrial Training Programmes of Polytechnics in Ghana: The Pertinent Issues. *World Journal of Education*, 5(1), 102-113.
- Nesaratnam, S., Karan, S. P. & Von, F. Y (2018). Conceptualisation of a Graduate Employability Framework from a Malaysian Perspective. *Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 8(4). 112-135
- Neuman, H. (1999). Internship. *Journal of Career World*, 27(6), 16
- Nghia, T. L. H. (2019). *Building soft skills for employability: Challenges and practices in Vietnam*. Routledge.
- Nijhof, W. J. (2005). Lifelong learning as a European skill formation policy. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(4), 401-417.
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill
- Omar, M. K., Bakar, A. K., & Rashid, A. M. (2012). Employability skill acquisition among Malaysian community college students. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3), 472.
- Onyon, C. (2012). Problem-based learning: a review of the educational and psychological theory. *The clinical teacher*, 9(1), 22-26.

- Orji, N. S. (2013). Assessment of employability skills development opportunities for senior secondary school chemistry students. *Journal of Educational Research and Reviews, 1*(2), 16-26.
- Osmani, M., Weerakkody, V., Hindi, N. M., Al-Esmail, R., Eldabi, T., Kapoor, K., & Irani, Z. (2015). Identifying the trends and impact of graduate attributes on employability: a literature review. *Tertiary Education and Management, 21*(4), 367-379.
- Osuala, E.C., (2004). *Principles and Methods of Business and Computer Education*. Enugu state, Enugu: Cheston Agency Ltd.
- Osuala, E.C., (1989). *Principles & Practice of Business Education*. Obosi, Nigeria: Pacific Correspondence College and Press Ltd.
- Payne, S. M., Hudson, J., Akehurst, S., & Ntoumanis, N. (2013). Development and initial validation of the impression motivation in sport questionnaire–team. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 35*(3), 281-298.
- Peterson, T. O., & Van Fleet, D. D. (2004). The ongoing legacy of RL Katz. *Management decision, 42*(10), 1297-130.
- Popham, E. L., Blockhus, W., & Schrag, A. F. (1975). *A teaching-learning system for business education*. Gregg Division, McGraw-Hill.
- Potnuru, R. K. G., & Sahoo, C. K. (2016). HRD interventions, employee competencies and organizational effectiveness: an empirical study. *European Journal of Training and Development, 40*(5), 345-365
- Prieto, B. (2013). Establishing and building leadership skills. *Leadership and Management in Engineering, 13*(3), 209-211.



- Qiong O. (2017). A brief introduction to perception. *Studies in Literature and Language Journal*, 15(4), 18-28.
- Rahi, S. (2017). Research design and methods: A systematic review of research paradigms, sampling issues and instruments development. *International Journal of Economics & Management Sciences*, 6(2), 1-5.
- Reddy, M. C. (2019). Employability in Higher Education: Problems and Prospectives. *South Asian Research Journal of Business and Management*, 1(3), 4
- Richens, G. (1999). *Perceptions of Southern Nevada employers regarding the importance of SCANS workplace basic skills. Annual meeting of the Association for Career and Technical Education*. Orlando, FL.
- Rigby, M., & Sanchis, E. (2006). The concept of skill and its social construction. *European journal of vocational training*, 37(1), 22.
- Robinson, J. P. (2000). The workplace. *Alabama Cooperative Extension System*, 1(3), 1-3.
- Rothwell, A. & Arnold, J. (2007). Self-perceived employability: Development and validation of a scale. *Personal Review*, 36(1). 23-41.
- Saad, M. S. M., Robani, A., Jano, Z., & Majid, I. A. (2013). Employers' perception on engineering, information and communication technology (ICT) students' employability skills. *Global Journal of Engineering Education*, 15(1), 42-46.
- Salant, P. & Dillman, D. A. (1994). *How to conduct your own survey*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Sanusi, J.O (2002). *Keynote Address Presented at the (PGDPA) Post Graduate Diploma and (CPA) Certificate Course, both in Public Administration, Graduation Ceremony of the administrative Staff College of Nigeria ASCON on 13th December, 2002.* Nigeria: ASCON

Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American economic review*, 1-17.

Segbenya, M., Opong, N. Y., & Baafi-Frimpong, S. A. (2021). The role of national service in enhancing employability skills of tertiary graduates in Ghana: a case of national service personnel in the Central Region. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-07-2020-0162>

Selvadurai, S., Choy, E. A., & Maros, M. (2012). Generic skills of prospective graduates from the employers' perspectives. *Asian Social Science*, 8(12), 295-303.

Sexton, D. L., & Upton, N. B. (1987). Evaluation of an innovative approach to Teaching entrepreneurship. *Journal of small business management*, 25(1), 35.

Shank, G., & Brown, L. (2007). *Exploring educational research literacy*. New York: Routledge.

Sherer, M., & Eadie, R. (1987). Employability skills: Key to success. *Thrust*, 17(2), 16-17.

Singh, G. K. G., & Singh, S. K. G. (2008). Malaysian graduates' employability skills. *UNITAR e-Journal*, 4(1), 15-45.

- Smith, M., Bell, K., Bennett, D. & McAlpine, A. (2018). *Employability in a global context: Evolving policy and practice in employability, work integrated learning and career development learning*. Wollongong Australia: Graduate Careers Australia.
- Speelman, C. (2005). *Skill acquisition: History, questions, and theories*. In C. Speelman & K. Kinser (Eds.), *Beyond the learning curve: The construction of mind* (26-64). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (2011). Interpersonal Skills. *The Sage handbook of interpersonal commitment*, 4, 481-527.
- Subramanian, K. R. (2017). Higher Education and Employability Skills. *International Journal of Combined Research and Development*, 6(1). 711-721.
- Succi, C., & Canovi, M. (2020). Soft skills to enhance graduate employability: comparing students and employers' perceptions. *Studies in Higher Education*, 45(9), 1834-1847.
- Suleman, F. (2018). The employability skills of higher education graduates: insights into conceptual framework and methodological options. *Higher Education*, 76 (2), 263-278.
- Syafii, W., & Yasin, R. M. (2013). Problem solving skills and learning achievements through problem-based module in teaching and learning biology in high school. *Asian Social Science*, 9(12), 220.
- Talargae, A. (2012). Enhancing the Occupational Competencies of Graduates in Ethiopia. Managing the Challenges of Employment. *Journal of Rift Valley*

*University College, 1(2), 61-78.*

The Gallup Organization (November 2010). *Flash EB Series #304: Employers' perception of graduate employability*. Analytical report. Available at internet: [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl\\_304\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/flash/fl_304_en.pdf)

Tiraieyari, N., & Hamid, J. A. (2015). Is Employability Orientation More Enhanced by Career Self-Efficacy or Leadership Attribute?. *Modern Applied Science, 9(8), 57.*

Towers-Clark, J. (2015). Undergraduate accounting students: prepared for the workplace?. *Journal of International Education In Business, 8(1), 37-48.*

Tryofos, P. (1996). *Sampling Methods for Applied Research: Text and cases*. New York: John Wiley and sons.

UKCES (2016). *Employer skills survey 2015: UK results*. London, UK: UK commission for employment and skills.

Wang, Y., & Chiew, V. (2010). On the cognitive process of human problem solving. *Cognitive systems research, 11(1), 81-92.*

Weligamage, S. S. (2009). *Graduates' employability skills: Evidence from literature review*. Sri Lanka: University of Kelaniya.

Wessels, M. L., & Jacobs, J. M. (2010). Views of industry and higher education on cooperative education in the Gauteng province of South Africa. *Journal for New Generation Sciences, 8(3), 167-186.*

Wickramasinghe, V. and Perera, L. (2010). Graduates', university lecturers' and employers' perception towards employability skills. *Education + Training, 52(3), 225-244.*

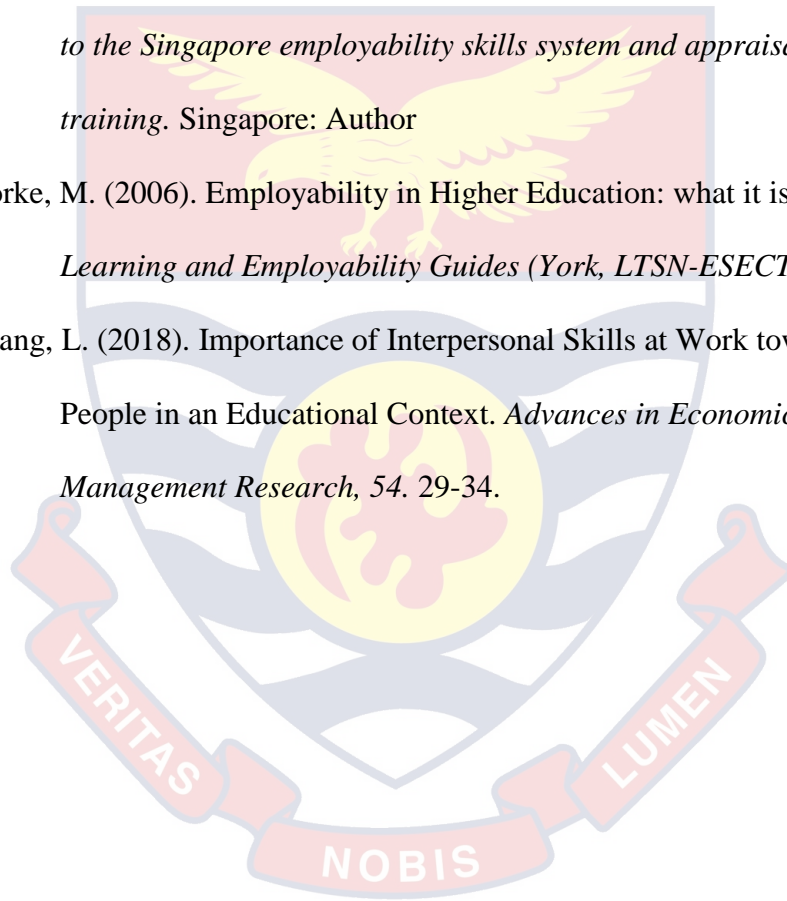
Williams, S., Hesketh, A. J., & Brown, P. (2003). Employability in a knowledge-driven economy. *Journal of education and work*, 16(2), 107-126.

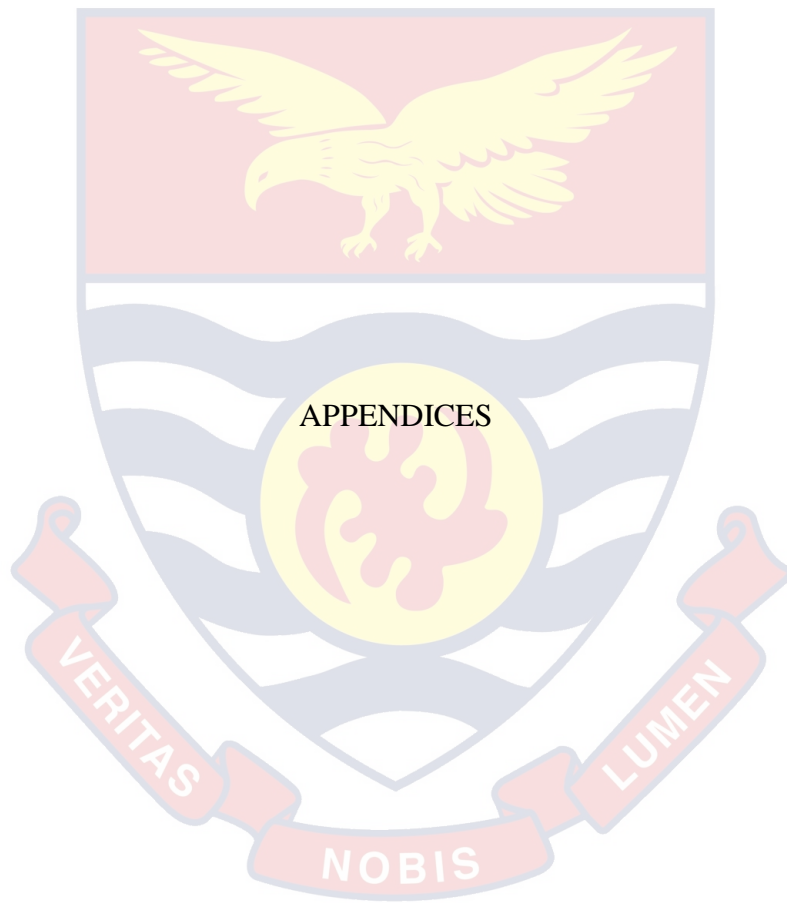
Wongnaa, C. A., & Boachie, W. K. (2018). Perception and adoption of competency-based training by academics in Ghana. *International journal of STEM education*, 5(1), 1-13.

Workforce Development Agency (WDA), Singapore (2006). *Employers' guide to the Singapore employability skills system and appraisal of workers for training*. Singapore: Author

Yorke, M. (2006). Employability in Higher Education: what it is – what it is not. *Learning and Employability Guides (York, LTSN-ESECT)*, 1, 21-24.

Zhang, L. (2018). Importance of Interpersonal Skills at Work towards Managing People in an Educational Context. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, 54. 29-34.





APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
 COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES  
 FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION  
 DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

Dear respondent, the purpose of this survey is to find out your perception on the employable skills administrators need to possess for their success in the workplace. I humbly plead for your maximum co-operation and assure you that every information you provide here will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The items on this questionnaire has been divided into two sections. Kindly read through the items and respond them as objectively as possible by ticking or circling your response. Thank you for being part of this study.

**SECTION A**

**Importance of skills.** To what extent do you believe the following skills are so important for the success of administrators in the workplace?

Rate on a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (very Important)

S/N	ITEMS	RATE				
1.	Written communication skills: ability to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Oral communication skills: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Leadership skills : ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Problem-solving skills: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	1	2	3	4	5

5.	Interpersonal skills: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Teamwork skills : ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Computer technology skills : ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry	1	2	3	4	5

### SECTION B

**Level of skills.** To what extent do your administrators possess these skills?

Rate on a scale from 1 (do not possess) to 5 (fully possess)

S/N	ITEMS	RATE				
		1	2	3	4	5
8.	Written communication skills: ability to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Oral communication skills: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Leadership skills : ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Problem-solving skills: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Interpersonal skills: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Teamwork skills : ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Computer technology skills : ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry	1	2	3	4	5



**APPENDIX B**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADMINISTRATORS**

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION**

Dear respondent, the purpose of this survey is to find out your perception on the employable skills administrators need to possess for their success in the workplace. I humbly plead for your maximum co-operation and assure you that every information you provide here will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The items on this questionnaire has been divided into two sections. Kindly read through the items and respond them as objectively as possible by ticking or circling your response. Thank you for being part of this study.

**SECTION A**

**Importance of skills.** To what extent do you believe the following skills are so important for the success of administrators in the workplace?  
Rate on a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (very Important)

Written communication skills: ability to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
Oral communication skills: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking.	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership skills : ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5
Problem-solving skills: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	1	2	3	4	5
Interpersonal skills: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill.	1	2	3	4	5

Teamwork skills : ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	1	2	3	4	5
Computer technology skills : ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry	1	2	3	4	5

**SECTION B**

**Level of skills.** To what extent do you possess these skills?

Rate on a scale from 1 (do not possess) to 5 (fully possess)

Written communication skills: ability to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
Oral communication skills: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking.	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership skills : ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5
Problem-solving skills: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	1	2	3	4	5
Interpersonal skills: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill.	1	2	3	4	5
Teamwork skills : ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	1	2	3	4	5
Computer technology skills : ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry	1	2	3	4	5

**APPENDIX C  
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MANAGEMENT STUDENTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION**

Dear respondent, the purpose of this survey is to find out your perception on the employable skills management students need to possess for their success in the workplace. I humbly plead for your maximum co-operation and assure you that every information you provide here will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The items on this questionnaire has been divided into five (5) sections. Kindly read through the items and respond them as objectively as possible by ticking or circling your response. Thank you for being part of this study.

**SECTION A: Personal Data**

Dear Student, please indicate the following:

1. Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]      3. Programme: .....
2. Level.....      4. Ag: 17-24 [ ]      25 & above [ ]

**SECTION B:**

**Importance of skills.** To what extent do you believe the following skills are so important for success in the workplace that they should be addressed throughout the business curriculum?

Rate on a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (very Important)

I consider the following skills important across the curriculum:

S/N	ITEMS	RATE				
		1	2	3	4	5
5.	Written communication skills: ability to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing.					
6.	Oral communication skills: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking.					

7.	Leadership skills : ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Problem-solving skills: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Interpersonal skills: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Teamwork skills : ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Computer technology skills : ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry	1	2	3	4	5

**SECTION C - Extent of integration**

Please circle the number that best describes the degree to which you believe these skills are integrated throughout your business curriculum.

Rate on a scale from 1 (not integrated) to 5 (fully integrated)

S/N	ITEMS	RATE				
12.	Written communication skills: ability' to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Oral communication skills: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Leadership skills : ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Problem-solving skills: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Interpersonal skills: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Teamwork skills : ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	1	2	3	4	5

18.	Computer technology skills : ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry	1	2	3	4	5
-----	--	---	---	---	---	---

**SECTION D - Possession of skills**

Please circle the number that best describe the degree to which you perceive you possess the following skills. Rate on a scale from 1 (does not possess) to 5 (fully possess)

S/N	ITEMS	RATE				
19.	Written communication skills: ability' to express effectively one's thoughts, information and messages in writing.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Oral communication skills: ability to clearly express one's thoughts, information and messages in speaking.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Leadership skills : ability to influence and inspire others in ways that enhance their productivity and satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Problem-solving skills: ability to identify and critically assess problem and devise a plan of action for its solution	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Interpersonal skills: ability to interact effectively with others with sensitivity and skill	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Teamwork skills : ability to work collaboratively with others from diverse background	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Computer technology skills : ability to generate spreadsheets, graphs, flowcharts and tables useful in business/industry	1	2	3	4	5

**SECTION E- Methods used to integrate skills**

Please circle the number that best indicate the degree to which you believe the following teaching strategies have been applied by your professors across all your business courses.

Rate on a scale from 1 (never applied) to 5 (fully applied)

S/N	ITEMS	RATE				
	Teaching strategies					
26.	1) Students are encouraged to work in groups	1	2	3	4	5

27.	2) The traditional lecture strategy	1	2	3	4	5
28.	3) Individual presentations by students are required	1	2	3	4	5
29.	4) Case-base instruction (case studies)	1	2	3	4	5
30.	5) Business simulations with computers	1	2	3	4	5
31.	6) Internship experiences (is this articulated in the curriculum and supported by the school?)	1	2	3	4	5



APPENDIX D

INTRODUCTORY LETTER



APPENDIX E

WORKINGS FOR PROPORTIONATE STRATIFIED SAMPLING

Total Population = 334

Sample size = 217

Stratification:

1. Heads of department = 99

2. Administrators = 99

3. Students = 136

Therefore, proportionate Sampling is:

$$\text{Heads of department} = \frac{99}{334} = 64$$

$$\text{Administrators} = \frac{99}{334} = 64$$

$$\text{Students} = \frac{136}{334} = 89$$

