

Graduates' Employability Skills: Final Year Undergraduates' Perspective

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Enhancing graduate employability skills is considered as an important task within the Sri Lankan University community. In order to enhance competitive advantage for graduate employment, students need to develop employability skills in addition to the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge. Employability skills include cognitive skills, subject-specific skills and key skills. The labour market needs and the employers' requirements for skills from graduates are changing. Undergraduate students should be aware of the labour market needs and future employability skills requirement from the labour market.

This study was conducted with the objectives of identifying the final year undergraduates' perspective on the nature of their employment situation after graduation and identifying undergraduates' understanding and competencies on employability skills. Data for the study were gathered from the selected sample of final year undergraduates from Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Kelaniya through a survey using a structured questionnaire. Survey questions were designed to obtain information on skill needs of sample respondents based on the employability skills identified from the literature review.

Findings reveal that the majority of final year undergraduates were expected to select future employment in a government sector and employment expectations are different from one study programme to another. Perspectives on competencies on employability skills showed differences among study programmes. Undergraduates also show lack of knowledge on skill needs of the labour market. This study concluded that graduates should improve their understanding on requirement of the skill needs of the labour market and enhance their employability skills in order to add competitive advantage for graduate employment.

Key words: Graduates; Employability; Skills; Competencies; Labour Market

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