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EXAMINE WHAT IS MEANT BY EMPLOYABILITY AND CRITICALLY EVALUATE  
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1542 Words

Examine what is meant by employability and critically evaluate how students, universities and employers engage with it

In this modern world, the development of science and technology has reached a great achievement and influenced almost all aspects of human life. It influences not only aspects relate to personal life, but also in broader areas such as education and workplace. In the education, wide access of student to university education influences their chance to get jobs. There is a high competition between them for limited jobs. In the workplace sectors, employers' employ requirements for their employee candidates. The employers tend to believe that most of university graduates do not have good skills for a certain position. Moreover, the employers also directed critic to university as the university did not provide graduates who are ready to work.. As a result, there will be a high competition among employees, especially fresh graduates who will enter the workplace for the first time. Based on these facts, this essay will critically evaluate how universities, students and employers engage with employability and discuss the difficulties in defining this term accurately. Firstly, it will investigate how the different meanings of employability effect stakeholder engagement. Secondly, it will consider how graduates engage with employability and strategy that can they performed to increase their engagement. The last is

stakeholders' engagements especially in increasing graduates' employability.

The employees' skills and ability to access the workplace or to be employed is what people generally understand as employability. However, according to some scholars, employability is much more complex than what people generally perceive about it and its definition should not be simplified (Harvey 2005, Holmes 2006; Rae 2007 cited Tymon 2013). An aspect of employability's complexities is because it cannot be seen from a single perspective, especially in the issue of developing employability. Hugh Jones, Sutherland, and Cross (2006 cited in Tymon 2013) argue that in terms of developing employability, there are three different perspectives that should be incorporated i. e. perspectives of the employers, the students, and the higher education institution.

When discussing employability and graduates, the main attention will be directed to the concept of graduates' readiness to access workplaces after their university education. The university graduates are commonly considered as students who have acquired basic skills and knowledge that employers require in a workplace (Clarke 2017). However, in reality, most of the graduates do not have good knowledge and skills to enter the workplace. Cumming (2010 cited in Tymon 2013) believes that what prevents graduates to effectively participate in the workplace is because they lack of appropriate skills, attitudes and characters required for a profession.

In line with this, Archer and Davison (2008 cited in Tymon) argue that although university graduates tend to have good qualifications, but they are

lacking soft skills and qualities which are required by nowadays employers' type. One of graduates' important soft skills needed by employers is communication skill. Although the graduates' communication skill is considered as the most important skill in the workplace, it could only meet low employers' satisfaction. Furthermore, Clark (2017) argues that industry and employer markets tend to believe that university qualification will not be enough for graduates' employability and could not guarantee employment. Dwesini's (2017) study finding also support the claim above. She concludes that to improve graduates' employability chances, the students should be involved in different practical employment experiences managed by the university. However, Tymon (2013) argues that university programs to improve students' personal skills would not contribute a lot to develop students' employability. It is because personal skills are complex areas and could only be personally developed by students.

However, the university engagement is not effective. They need to collaborate and develop some programs and activities with employers in preparing students for the workplaces (De La Harpe, Radloff, and Wyber 2000; Heaton, McCracken, and Harrison 2008 cited in Tymon 2013). Jackson and Wilton (2017) state that through the university students will be able to develop their various skills and competencies for greater employment opportunities. Furthermore, Kaufman & Feldman (2004 cited in O'Leary & Jackson 2017) point out that understanding of preferred jobs and the ability to acquire knowledge and skills for the workplace are actually students' expectation from higher educations or universities.

Dwesini (2017) states that the university will only be able to equip students with required knowledge and skills only if the university develops collaboration with industry and employers. When the university successfully develops activities or programs involving industry and employers, it will create an integration of knowledge that can be implemented in workplace contexts. Moreover, the university and industry collaboration will help students to understand personal attributes requires for successful career development, such as responsibilities, professional values, critical and reflective; understand work settings. This process will contribute to provide graduates better understanding of real knowledge and skills that workplaces actually need.

However, there has been a disagreement on the cooperation between university and industry or employers. Tymon's (2013) study at 92 universities in the UK, finds that activities which contribute to the development of employability skills such as involvement in the society, volunteering and other extra-curricular opportunities were not highly considered by the students. Moreover, most of the students will not be able to recognize and understand that these activities actually benefit to their personality development. Costea, Amiridis, and Crump (2012 cited in Clarke 2017) point out that there are some personal attributes often considered important by the employers but would not be able to be transferred through university education, for example talented, creative, and dynamic personality.

In terms of employability, employers play a crucial role. It is because the employers have an authority to determine recruitment or selection process <https://assignbuster.com/examine-what-is-meant-by-employability-and-critically-evaluate-how-students-universities-and-employers-engage-with-it/>

and decide who can successfully enter the employment and career area (Jackson and Wilton 2017). Tymon (2013) states that although the employers are the parties who will negotiate readiness of graduates to access workplaces, they continuously produce reports that university graduates are lack of the most basic skills needed for successful employment. It could be because employers tend to believe that it is the responsibility of universities to produce graduates with good employability skills (Dwesini 2017).

However, Ng and Feldman (2009 cited in Tymon 2013) totally disagree with the claim above. They argue that it is actually the responsibility of the employers to train graduates for certain jobs. In addition, West and Chur-Hansen (2004 cited in O'Leary & Jackson (2017) also claim that industry and employers would be more effective than university in developing graduate employability and shaping professional identity.

However, in fact, the employers keep forcing the university to provide 'work-ready' graduates, although there has been a major shift in university education regarding with student skills development (Clarke 2017).

Unfortunately, when the employers deliver the reports and urge universities to provide good graduate employability, the employers do not provide detailed information on aspects that the graduates should actually have to be qualified for the future jobs (Bridgstock 2009 cited in O'Leary & Jackson 2017).

In addition, the employers' perspectives above on the university graduate employability has existed since decades and has not shown significant changes. Therefore, Clarke (2017) suggests that it could be now is the best moment for the universities and employers to discuss the university roles in <https://assignbuster.com/examine-what-is-meant-by-employability-and-critically-evaluate-how-students-universities-and-employers-engage-with-it/>

terms of ‘ work-ready’ graduates and what employers actually expected from graduate employability.

A number of scholars have discussed that the graduate’s main problems in terms of employability engagement are lack of soft skills and professional quality (Archer and Davison 2008; Rae 2007; Branine 2008 cited in Tymon 2013). They also argue that the graduates lack of engagement with the employability could be influenced by students’ low appreciation to employability skills development.

Therefore, to increase graduates’ employability, all stakeholders including government, employers, higher education institutions and graduates themselves should have similar perception about employability frameworks and personal attributes (Tymon 2013). When all stockholders have similar perspectives, the graduates’ professional development and quality would be easily developed through personal development or through the university curriculum and programs. In addition, similar perceptions of stakeholders would also motivate employers to actively contribute to the development of student employability through collaborations with universities in real workplace practice environments and information about required employability skills (Dwesini 2017).

The essay discusses scholars’ different perspectives on employability and evaluate it from three different perspectives, i. e. student or graduates, university, and employers. In terms of university student or graduates’ employability, the main concern is on their ‘ soft skill’ development. Good academic qualification itself will not guarantee graduates get access to the

workplaces. The graduate's quality and readiness for a workplace could be acquired through their personal developments or through university programs focusing on personal skills developments. Universities' perspectives on employability relate to their responsibility in creating work ready graduates. It will only be possible if the university could develop collaborations with other stakeholders especially employers. University-employers collaboration has successfully developed graduates personal attributes for employability although there are other attributes for workplace which are impossible to be taught at university. Finally, employer engagement to employability. As a part of stakeholders which will directly employ graduates, the employers' roles tend to be authoritative. They determine not only graduates employability since selection process, but also force universities to produce 'work-ready' graduates without providing a clear information about good employee criteria.

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