

## **Gauging the Association of Employability Skills and Being Employable among Students**

Fayeq Ali Ali<sup>1</sup>

Ishik University, Department of Business and Administration, Erbil, Iraq

Correspondence: Fayeq Ali Ali, Ishik University, Department of Business and Administration, Erbil,

Iraq. Email: fayeq.ali@ishik.edu.iq

Received: July 28, 2017

Accepted: September 23, 2017

Online Published: October 1, 2017

doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v4i2sip39

**Abstract:** The current study is to measure the employability skills of students and to assess how employability skills are perceived in higher educations. Three sets of employability skills have been used such as Basic Academic Skills, Personal Qualities and High-Order Thinking. A questionnaire has been developed and distributed among students in universities, Erbil, Kurdistan. Respondents' opinions were assessed using a Likert scale analysis that shows opinions between two extremes of levels of agreement and disagreement. The current study focuses on the employability skills of students by evaluating the courses they have been taken. Study find out that communication skills, team working skills, computer skills, and critical thinking were among the employability skills which are expected by potential employers. The paper concludes that students have developed an adequate level of employability skill through Basic academic Skills and Personal Qualities leading to High Order Thinking.

**Keywords:** Basic Academic Skills, Personal Qualities, High Order Thinking, Employability Skills, Graduate

### **1. Introduction**

Students study for long years from school education to university for acquiring knowledge. The university education for four years equips a student with many skills like academic, personal, communication, leadership, decision making, creative thinking, self-management, time management, self-motivation etc. The current research is based on literature explaining different dimensions of students learning in the building up process of their career. Employability is a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy, employability is not only essential qualities of the new graduate. It should continually be up-to-date all through a man's working life (Yorke, 2006). Employability skills are generally divided into three skill sets; 1. Basic academic skills such as reading, writing, science, math, oral communication, and listening; 2. High order thinking skills such as learning, reasoning, creative thinking, decisions making, problem-solving; 3. Personal qualities such as self-confidence, self-control, social skills, punctual and efficient, self-directed, self-motivated and self-management these skills can be reachable by using a democratic approach. For example, teachers and parents should be good models. Students have opportunities to study and learn the place of work behavior that labor markets require. These ways increase student's knowledge of values, attitudes and work responsibilities (Robinson, 2000). The

purpose of the employability skills is to develop skills and knowledge of new students who want to develop and get a better job. Employability means the development of skills and adaptable workplaces in which all those capable of work are encouraged to develop the skills, knowledge, technology, and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives. The study focuses more on the employability skills, what students should gain from the courses and how these skills can be matched with the market.

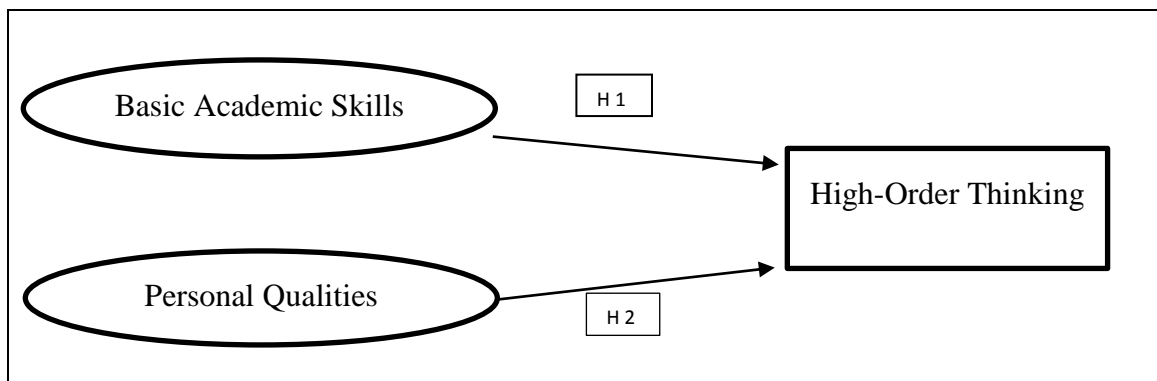
## 1.2 Research Objectives

To accomplish the research task based on the research problem formulated based on the broader view of research problem from the varied researcher varying point of view in the area. So the study is concentrated on the following research objectives explained below:

- To measure the importance of Basic Academic Skills among university students.
- To know the acceptance of Personal Qualities among university students.
- To measure the level of relationship of Basic Academic Skills and Personal Qualities with High Order Thinking.

## 1.3 Conceptual Model

Gauging the Association of Employability Skills and Being Employable Among Students



## 1.4 Hypothesis

H1: Students Basic Academic Skills are not affecting the High Order thinking to be employable.

H2: Students Personal Qualities do not have any relation with the High Order thinking to be employable.

## 2. Literature Review

Employability skills are not only the basic skills essential for receiving, maintaining, and doing well on a job, but also are attributes of employees that make them an advantage to employers. Employability skills are generally divided into three skill sets; 1. Basic academic skills 2. High order thinking skills 3. Personal qualities (Robinson, 2000). The following are the top ten skills that employers seek for them, companies

which look for such skills are Microsoft, Target Jobs, the BBC, Prospects, and other organizations. Ten skills are verbal communication, teamwork, commercial awareness, analyzing and investigating, self-motivation, drive, writing communication, planning and organization, flexibility and time management (University of Kent, 2016). It will be a mistake if we say that employability is about finding a job. Employability is about creating the link between study, student or individual's development and their activities which direct individuals' ability to find, keep and be successful in their chosen job. Also in his study Yabut (2009) stated that in universities curriculum there are clearly benefits to students in the employment market, it is related to any student studying for their own personal development, by being aware of their capabilities which they are looking for. The employability motivation in advanced education raises a scope of issues for college staff working in basic branches of knowledge. The venture represent in this article has tried to add to those endeavors. In addition, the educational approach created in this article has striven to uncover that explaining understudies with issues identifying with graduate business does not require the fracture of information into agreeable and basic models, and the consequent elimination of the previous. The basic hypothesis is a field of political reviews with abundant basic assets to casing issues identifying with graduate work that test less basic employability strategies (Ashe, 2012). The concept of employability provides a useful framework for examining general and urban labor markets and related rules in a range of different. A narrow supply-side view of employability skills and attributes can help to identify relevant sets of skills and policies for certain people in particular circumstances. However, a broader concept of employability also allows the additional consideration of vital demand, personal circumstances and other factors that influence the employability of people in a particular labor market, or at a particular time, and so are fundamental to those people gaining or changing employment (McQuaid & Danson, 2005). Together students and managers revealed preferences for "real courses were taken" and "subject important courses taken." However, huge varieties were additionally seen amongst students and supervisors. For example, from one viewpoint, administrators organized skills, such as "subject learning," "applying information," "listening successfully," "breadth of information," "working securely," "appreciates provokes," "self-administration," and "being very much prepped"; then again, students favored abilities like "capacity to fill in as a group inventor," "basic reasoning capacity," "judgment capacity," "complex critical thinking abilities," "arrangement capacity," "quality of reference," "sort of college," and "picture of the college." The review additionally observed that businesses esteemed the "Specific Communication Skill" measurement of the scale most; while, understudies had an inclination for the "Generic Skill" dimension (Chowdhury, 2016). Students' voice stays missing from the employability motivation for advanced education in the UK. Understudies themselves ought to be consistently informed about advanced education approach and practice. The British government ought to notice understudies' subjective reflections on educating, learning and work. The information from graduates and understudies inside this examination proposes that these exploration members understood that getting to be and staying employable is supported with disparity. The main employability talk covers these issues of social equity. The exploration discoveries suggest that the missing voice might be intentionally gone (Higdon, 2016). Examination sets up the part of communication education in employability by deciding how businesses of graduates view correspondence, recognizing interpersonal abilities that businesses see as relevant, and setting up whether these skills are incorporated into correspondence courses. To accomplish these points, nearby organizations were studied, and the outcomes were contrasted (Clokier, 2016). Hillage and Pollard model of employability can be thought of. The proof displayed proposes that the procedures of

enrollment, preparing, work arrangement, utilization, post-business support and occupation maintenance all include covering sets of social and ranked relations that differ amongst areas and parts, as well as inside them too. These relations definitely include issues of force, assets, basic leadership and duty. As such, it might be more productive to consider employability in social, as opposed to individual, terms and in doing as such to perceive that all gatherings in the condition have a commitment to make in giving the conditions where it can prosper (Gore, 2005). The decent variety of business results and difficulty of the graduate work condition in the media ventures presents noteworthy difficulties for the look into expertise improvement in undergrad media courses. All things considered, subjective input from graduates can furnish instructors with precious bits of knowledge on how they can address this difficulty (Michael & John, 2016).

Anne and Ann (2008) stated that Influencing employability to work is a mutual obligation. In their view, it must include a wide range of work present members and partners over a scope of levels and areas past the individual representative and independently employed laborer. These include managers and directors, unions, different manager associations, local advancement organizations and central and neighborhood government arrangement producers. Making and managing employability raises sensitive issues about how much we acknowledge and make conceivable the dubious parts of the new economy. We build furthermore, control ourselves, and take an interest in work associations, systems, unpaid and minimal paid positions since we trust that we can control our business results by controlling our conduct and connections (Smith, 2010). Cappelli (2015) suggest that the view that rises up out of these contentions is that the duty regarding building up the abilities that businesses need has been exchanged from the business to the activity searchers and schools. Such an exchange of duty would be significant in its suggestions. Schools, in any event as customarily imagined, are not suited to sorting out work involvement, the key trait that businesses need. Nor are they essentially great at showing work-based abilities. The impact is strong crosswise over different demonstrate determinations and in its size substantively important. While this impact could be normal in view of the writing breaking down target chance components, the primary commitment of this article is to point to the communication between the subjective likelihood of losing one's activity and employability. In spite of the fact that employability is at the focal point of the flexicurity banter in Europe, its part in forming welfare state inclinations has not been dissected up until this point (Marx, 2014). Robles (2012) explained in his investigation that the main 10 delicate abilities assets by business administrators. Despite the fact that the majority of the delicate abilities seem vital, not all are seen by business administrators to be similarly critical. This examination found that correspondence, honesty, and affability are the most vital relational aptitudes for victory. Delicate abilities are basic in the present working environment and ought to be seen as a speculation. Despite the fact that relational aptitudes are basic for managers, many employment candidates and current workers in business don't have satisfactory relational aptitudes. Associations need to prepare current workers to upgrade their delicate abilities. Despite the fact that we see many difficulties, we additionally have numerous chances to get ready business understudies for the present workforce. Business teachers need to comprehend the significance of relational abilities for their understudies and incorporate delicate aptitudes in their educational programs. Instructional techniques and strategies can be connected in the classroom to improve relational abilities. Delicate abilities and hard aptitudes ought to be incorporated to make a balanced business graduate. Additionally inquire about is expected to ponder relational aptitudes and decide whether other delicate abilities are esteemed as imperative as the qualities found in this investigation. Self-duty, the possibility that understudies have a

key part in deciding their own prosperity amid furthermore, after college, is featured. The two most compelling elements in self-saw employability, entry-level position involvement, and self-guided profession conduct that expect understudies to take a gander at alternatives and settle on positive choices about what they will do next. Self-overseeing singular conduct brings about expanded impression of self-employability and, thus, an improved probability of progress and the extension of work openings (Eivis et al., 2014). Regardless of these limitations, the discoveries give knowledge about the significance of and degree to which choosing social aptitudes are educated as seen by a national example of experts giving progress administrations. In spite of the fact that the execution of esteemed social talents is related with positive work results, there is restricted research about skills that are as of now esteemed by instructors. The discoveries from the present show that there was a solid consensus among the respondents in regards to the significance of a center arrangement of social talents. Curiously, the skills saw to be the most vital were not the talents that were educated. Seen significance of an ability might be one of the deciding variables when arranging and giving guideline (Martin et al., 2016).

### 3.1 Methodology

The core objective to conduct the study is to discover employability skills among students. Research questionnaire is constructed on the basis of standardized measurement instruments and filled through personal visit to the students and online. Research population was aimed to find out employability skills among students' universities in Erbil, Kurdistan. For sampling, researcher used random approach among second, third and fourth grade and graduated students, for the graduate students sample was around 50 students. Response rate, researcher distributed 320 questionnaire in the universities in Erbil and he expected to get 250, but in the end he got 195 of fulfilled questionnaire, also for getting the respond rate from graduated students on 2015 he expected to get 40 responses but he got 27 responses via online approach.

Table 1- Reliability Tests

---

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.781	16

---

Table (1) shows the reliability test of the study. Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) scale has been used to check the reliability of adopted construct.

Table 2- Correlations Analysis

		Correlations		
		Basic academic skills	Personal qualities	High order thinking
Basic academic skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.416**	.549**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	222	222	222
Personal qualities	Pearson Correlation	.416**	1	.453**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	222	222	222
High order thinking	Pearson Correlation	.549**	.453**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	222	222	222

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In table (2) Pearson's correlation analysis were tested to the connection (whether positive, negative or no relationship) between two dependents variable such as Basic Academic Skills and Personal Qualities and independent variable of High Order Thinking. Pearson correlation value (r) ranges between -1 to 1. If the value of Pearson correlation is r=1 then it shows a perfect positive linear relationship between variables, r=0 shows no relationship between variables and if the Pearson correlation value r=-1 depicts the perfect negative linear relationship between variables. A highly positive and significant relationship has found between dependents and independent variable.

Table 3- Demographic analysis

Items		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	124	55.9
	Female	98	44.1
Marital status	Single	195	87.8
	Married	26	11.7
	Divorced	1	.5
Education level	Graduated	27	12.2
	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	59	26.6
	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	72	32.4
	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	64	28.8
Profession	Employed	18	8.1
	Self-employed	18	8.1
	Part-time	15	6.8
	Unemployed	170	76.6

Monthly household income in USD	Less than \$500	10	4.5
	\$500-\$800	41	18.5
	\$800-\$1200	45	20.3
	\$1200-\$1500	41	18.5
	\$1500-\$2000	38	17.1
	More than \$2000	47	20.8
<b>Total</b>		222	100

Table 4- Items Data Analysis

Parameter		Frequency	Percent
The courses which have been taught in the department were structured in a way that increased my technical skills	Strongly Disagree	7	3.2
	Disagree	20	9.0
	Neutral	59	26.6
	Agree	63	28.3
	Strongly Agree	73	32.9
The courses which have been taught in the department developed my reading and writing skills	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
	Disagree	44	19.8
	Neutral	69	31.1
	Agree	67	30.2
	Strongly Agree	42	18.9
The courses which have been taught in the department helped me to make improvement in my acquisition of my language	Strongly Disagree	8	3.6
	Disagree	21	9.5
	Neutral	61	27.5
	Agree	70	31.5
	Strongly Agree	62	27.9
The courses which	Strongly Disagree	15	6.7

have been taught in the department developed my ability to interact with diverse groups of people orally	Disagree	26	11.7
	Neutral	56	25.3
	Agree	73	32.9
	Strongly Agree	52	23.4
The courses which have been taught in the department developed my reasoning skills	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
	Disagree	35	15.3
	Neutral	58	26.1
	Agree	67	30.2
	Strongly Agree	63	28.4
The courses which have been taught in the department enhanced my communication skills	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
	Disagree	36	16.2
	Neutral	55	24.8
	Agree	57	25.7
	Strongly Agree	74	33.3
The courses which have been taught in the department helped me and improved my understanding of businesses locally and internationally	Strongly Disagree	22	9.9
	Disagree	30	13.5
	Neutral	56	25.2
	Agree	61	27.5
	Strongly Agree	53	23.9
The courses which have been taught in the department enhanced my teamwork skills	Strongly Disagree	7	3.1
	Disagree	26	11.7
	Neutral	84	37.8
	Agree	60	27.0



	Strongly Agree	45	20.3
The courses which have been taught in the department helped me in achieving organizational skills	Strongly Disagree	11	4.9
	Disagree	28	12.6
	Neutral	70	31.5
	Agree	73	32.9
	Strongly Agree	40	18.0
The courses which have been taught in the department provide leadership on how to become a competent specialized	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
	Disagree	45	20.3
	Neutral	61	27.5
	Agree	71	32.0
	Strongly Agree	45	20.3
The courses which have been taught in the department helped me to know legal and ethical issues	Strongly Disagree	14	6.3
	Disagree	30	13.5
	Neutral	63	28.4
	Agree	58	26.1
	Strongly Agree	57	25.7
The courses which have been taught in the department developed my ability to relate theory to practice	Strongly Disagree	13	5.9
	Disagree	32	14.4
	Neutral	76	34.2
	Agree	64	28.8
	Strongly Agree	37	16.7
The courses which have been taught in the	Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
	Disagree	44	19.8

department's homework and lectures helpfully complemented one another in a way that enhanced my ability to think creatively	Neutral	76	34.2
	Agree	65	29.3
	Strongly Agree	37	16.7
The courses which have been taught in the department increased my learning skill	Strongly Disagree	17	7.6
	Disagree	35	15.7
	Neutral	67	30.2
	Agree	65	29.3
	Strongly Agree	38	17.1
The courses which have been taught in the department helped me in identifying and solving problems	Strongly Disagree	19	8.5
	Disagree	34	15.3
	Neutral	58	26.1
	Agree	53	23.8
	Strongly Agree	58	26.1
The courses which have been taught in the department give me better insight into the decisions making	Strongly Disagree	21	9.4
	Disagree	20	9.0
	Neutral	39	17.6
	Agree	64	28.8
	Strongly Agree	78	35.1
<b>Total</b>		222	100

Table 5- Regression Analysis having Independent Variable- basic Academic Skills and Dependent Variable- High order Thinking

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.549 <sup>a</sup>	.302	.298	.46147		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Basic Academic Skills						
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	20.224	1	20.224	94.970	.000 <sup>b</sup>
1	Residual	46.849	220	.213		
	Total	67.073	221			
a. Dependent Variable: High Order Thinking						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Basic Academic Skills						
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	1.667	.208		8.010	.000
1	Basic Academic Skills	.541	.056	.549	9.745	.000
a. Dependent Variable: High Order Thinking						

Table 5 shows the regression analysis taking Basic Academic Skills as independent variable, and High Order Thinking as the dependent variable. The model summary table is showing the value of R (correlation coefficient) is 0.549, R Squared (the effect of independent variable on the dependent variable) is 0.302. It shows basic Academic Skills is having 54% of association with High Order Thinking. Further basic academic learning has 30% effect on High Order Thinking.

Table 6- Regression Analysis having Independent Variable- Personal Qualities and Dependent Variable- High order Thinking

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.453 <sup>a</sup>	.206	.202	.49216		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Personal Qualities						
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.784	1	13.784	56.906	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	53.289	220	.242		
	Total	67.073	221			
a. Dependent Variable: High Order Thinking						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Personal Qualities						
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.454	.165		14.882	.000
	Personal Qualities	.350	.046	.453	7.544	.000
a. Dependent Variable: High Order Thinking						

Table 6 shows the regression analysis taking Personal Qualities as independent variable, and High Order Thinking as the dependent variable. The model summary table is showing the value of R (correlation coefficient) is 0.453, R Squared (the effect of independent variable on the dependent variable) is 0.206. It shows Personal Qualities is having 45% of association with High Order Thinking. Further Personal Qualities skill has 20% effect on High Order Thinking.

#### 4.1 Conclusion

The purpose of the current study is to measure the effect of Basic Academic Skills and Personal Qualities on the High Order Thinking of universities' students. Employability skills are essential qualifications that determine the job seekers chances in getting hired. Employability skills are essentially transferable skills and required skills that employers seek in a potential employee such skills and qualifications are, ability to communicate clearly, team-work, interpersonal skills, technical skills like computer skills, thinking critically, planning, organizing, self-motivation, high sense of integrity, initiation all these qualities make new candidate or new graduate to gain and develop further on the career path. Research objectives set as to measure the importance of Basic Academic Skills among university students, to know the acceptance of Personal Qualities among university students, to measure the level of relationship of Basic Academic Skills and Personal Qualities with High Order Thinking could get reached having the data analysis. Hypothesis conceptualized for the study also get analyzed where both concepts are getting accepted strongly. Employability skills can be taught in courses, but also they need much more effort and understandings of the fields which students have interest in it. In this study, a self-administrative questionnaire has been developed based on three categories, Independents as Basic Academic Skills and Personal Qualities and dependent variable as High-Order Thinking. The degree of skills could be gained among students through courses in the universities which have been shown in the data analysis table-4. So the analysis shows that there is a positive relationship between the dependent variable (High Order Thinking) and independent variables (Basic academic Skills and Personal Qualities).

#### References

- Ashe, F. (2012). Harnessing Political Theory to Facilitate Students Engagement with Graduate 'Employability': A Critical Pyramid Approach. *Politics*, 32(2), 129-137.
- Anne, D. B., & Ann, D. (2008). Making Employability 'Work'. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics*, 2-15.
- Chowdhury, M. (2016). Employability skills for entry-level human resources management positions: Perceptions of students and employers. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 25(2), 55-68.
- Clokie, T. E. (2016). Graduate Employability and Communication Competence. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 79(4), 442-463.
- Cappelli, P. H. (2015). Skill Gaps, Skill Shortages, and Skill Mismatches: Evidence and Arguments for the United States. *Ilr sagepub*, 251-284.
- Eivis, Q., Neal, M., & Carol, S. (2014). An empirical study of self-perceived Improving the prospects for student employment success in an uncertain environment. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 199-211.
- Gore, T. (2005). Extending Employability or Solving Employers' Recruitment Problems? Demand-led Approaches as an Instrument of Labour Market Policy. *Urban Studies*, 42(2), 341-353.
- Higdon, R. (2016). Employability: The missing voice: How student and graduate views could be used to develop future higher education policy and inform curricula. *Power and Education*, 892), 176-195.
- Martin, A., Carolyn, H., Colleen, A. T., & Iaron A. S. (2016). Employment Social Skills: What Skills Are Really Valued? *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 210-218.
- Marx, P. (2014). The effect of job insecurity and employability on preferences for redistribution in Western Europe. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 251-263.

- Michael, W., & John, W. (2016). Graduates' attitudes to research skill development in undergraduate media education. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 113-127.
- Mcquaid, R. A., & Danson, M. (2005). Introducing Employability. *Urban Studies*, 42(2), 191-195.
- Robinson, D. J. (2009). What are employability skills? *Alabama Cooperative Extension System* 1-3.
- Robinson, J. P. (2000). What Are Employability Skills? *Alabama cooperative extension System*, 1(3), 3-4.
- Robles, M. M. (2012). Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 453-463.
- Skills You Need. (2016). *Employability Skills - Skills You Need for a Job*. Retrieved on June 2016, from Skills you need: <http://www.skillsyouneed.com/general/employability-skills.html>
- Smith, V. (2010). Review article: Enhancing employability: Human, cultural, and social capital in an era of turbulent unpredictability. *Human Relations*, 281-296.
- University of Kent (2016). *What are the top ten skills that employers want?* Retrieved from careers and employability services: <http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/top-ten-skills.htm>
- Yabut, E. V. (2009). Enhancing employability through quality assurance. The Centro Escolar University Experience. *ASAIHL*, 136-137.
- Yorke, M. (2006). *Employability in higher education: what is it - what it is not?* *The Higher Education Academy*, 2-3.