Journal of Educational Sciences ***(JEDUS)***
Fall & Winter, 2025, *32*(2), 297-316
DOI: 10.22055/edus.2024.43062.3435

Received: 07 May 2023
Accepted: 08 Apr 2024

Original Article

Validation of the University Curriculum Model Based on Fugit's Employability Model

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Abstract

The present study was conducted with the aim of validating a university curriculum model based on Fugate's employability model. Considering continuous social changes, university education and research should be directed toward addressing the social, economic, cultural, and technological problems of society in order to help resolve issues related to employment and the acquisition of new occupational competencies. For more than three decades, reforming the mission of universities in relation to employment has been a matter of global attention. Accordingly, some leading universities have reorganized their managerial structures and curricula in ways that enable graduates to take a leading role in technology production, the provision of innovative solutions, and the resolution of social and economic problems. In terms of purpose, the present research was developmental and was conducted using a quantitative approach with a survey design. The research instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire, and the statistical population consisted of all undergraduate students studying at public universities in Tehran. A stratified sampling method was employed. Based on Cochran's formula, the sample size was estimated at 384 participants; however, due to certain limitations, 290 completed questionnaires were collected and entered into the analysis process. The collected data were examined using analytical tests. The findings indicated that adaptability had a positive and direct effect on employability skills (0.529). In addition, job identity exerted a positive and direct effect on employability skills (0.807), and human–social capital also showed a positive and direct effect on employability skills (0.424). Furthermore, curriculum content affected human–social capital (0.960). Teaching methods influenced human–social capital (0.998) and job identity (0.236). Evaluation methods affected human–social capital (1.23). Learner

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characteristics influenced human–social capital (0.247). Instructor characteristics affected job identity (1.39) and adaptability (0.382). Moreover, the learning environment affected job identity (1.13) and, finally, adaptability (2.06). Overall, the results demonstrate that university curriculum elements play an important role in strengthening employability skills through their effects on adaptability, job identity, and human–social capital within the framework of Fugate's employability model.

Keywords: University Curriculum, Employability, Fugit Model

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Rapid social, economic, and technological changes over recent decades have fundamentally transformed the mission and role of universities. Higher education institutions are no longer expected to function solely as centers for theoretical knowledge production and academic research; rather, they are increasingly required to prepare graduates who are capable of effective participation in the labor market. One of the most critical challenges facing higher education systems is the growing mismatch between university curricula and the real needs of the labor market, which has resulted in graduate unemployment and underemployment. In this context, the concept of employability has gained significant attention. Employability refers to a set of competencies, skills, attitudes, and personal resources that enable individuals to obtain, maintain, and, when necessary, change employment successfully. Among various employability frameworks, Fugate's employability model is considered one of the most comprehensive, as it conceptualizes employability as a psychosocial construct consisting of job identity, human–social capital, and adaptability. These components collectively influence individuals' capacity to navigate complex and dynamic career environments. Despite the importance of employability, university curricula in many developing contexts have not systematically incorporated employability-oriented principles. Therefore, the present study aimed to validate a university curriculum model based on Fugate's employability model, focusing on the extent to which curriculum elements contribute to students' employability skills.

Method

This study was developmental in purpose and employed a quantitative survey research design. The statistical population included all undergraduate

students enrolled in public comprehensive universities in Tehran. A stratified random sampling method was used, whereby each university constituted a stratum. Based on Cochran's formula, a sample size of 384 students was estimated; however, due to practical constraints, 290 completed questionnaires were returned and analyzed.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of 76 items designed to measure curriculum elements (objectives, content, teaching methods, evaluation methods, instructor characteristics, and learning environment) and employability dimensions derived from Fugate's model. Content validity was assessed using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and Content Validity Index (CVI). One item was removed due to insufficient CVR, and the remaining items demonstrated acceptable CVI values (above 0.80). Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.813, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 28 and included the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for normality, Pearson correlation coefficients, multiple linear regression, and path analysis to examine the relationships among variables and to assess the proposed curriculum model.

Results

The findings revealed statistically significant and positive relationships between university curriculum elements and students' employability components. Specifically, adaptability ($\beta = 0.529$), job identity ($\beta = 0.807$), and human–social capital ($\beta = 0.424$) had direct and positive effects on employability skills. Moreover, curriculum content, teaching methods, evaluation strategies, instructor characteristics, and learning environment significantly influenced human–social capital, job identity, and adaptability.

Regression analysis indicated that, with the exception of curriculum objectives, all curriculum components had a significant effect on students' employability. Instructor characteristics and learning environment demonstrated the strongest predictive power, followed by curriculum content, evaluation methods, and teaching strategies. The path analysis results confirmed the adequacy and goodness of fit of the proposed curriculum model based on Fugate's employability framework, supporting the hypothesized relationships among curriculum elements and employability dimensions.

Discussion

The results of this study highlight the crucial role of employability-oriented curriculum design in bridging the gap between higher education and labor market demands. The validated model suggests that enhancing students' employability requires a comprehensive and integrated approach to

curriculum planning, rather than isolated or post-graduation interventions. Emphasis on interactive and student-centered teaching methods, performance-based assessment, supportive and flexible learning environments, and the development of students' job identity and human–social capital can significantly improve employability outcomes.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide valuable implications for higher education policymakers, curriculum planners, and university administrators seeking to reform academic programs in line with labor market expectations. Overall, the study underscores that improving graduate employability necessitates moving beyond traditional, content-centered curricula toward dynamic, competency-based educational models aligned with contemporary socio-economic realities.

Author Contributions: In the present study; the research design, the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation of the findings, was done by researchers and discussed with colleagues and professors of technology.

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare there is no conflict of interest in this article.

Funding: Funding: The present study did not receive financial support from any institution and all costs were borne by researchers