

Advancing Career Opportunities: Employers' Perspectives into the Role of English Proficiency and Communication Skills in Boosting Employability

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Abstract:

Employers expect university graduates entering the job market to be well-equipped with the core skills of English Language Communicative Competence (ELCC). Proficiency in English facilitates better collaboration with global partners and enhances overall organisational performance. Although Higher Education (HE) providers continue to develop employability skills, there might still be a mismatch between the ELCC of graduates entering the job market and employers' expectations. Also, the development and usage of ELCC might be more complicated than ever, especially as educational technologies continue to evolve and integrate more deeply into our learning environments (e.g. AI-powered chatbots, speech recognition technology).

The study seeks to consider the importance of English proficiency and communication skills in the Hong Kong job market, the relative importance of English proficiency and communication skills, and employers' expectations and requirements for new graduate employees. It builds a foundation for HE providers to provide better training to prepare graduates for the workplace. This investigation draws theoretical underpinnings from the social capital theory and the competency-based education and training (CBET) framework. The data for this paper were from semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 Hong Kong employers in the private sector who were in a position to recruit employees. The data was analysed using MAXQDA software to facilitate this coding process, enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of data analysis. The research unveiled that employers in Hong Kong generally have some expectations and requirements of newly hired graduates, like Mandarin and English, which were consistently highlighted as crucial due to widespread business use.

Keywords:

Employability, English Language Communicative Competence, Employers' Perspectives, University Graduates, Higher Education Providers.