ADA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

Use of Teaching Strategies in Higher Educational Institutions for Graduate Employability

Aygun Isgandarova

Contact e-mail: isgenderaygun@gmail.com

ADA UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

OF

Aygun Isgandarova

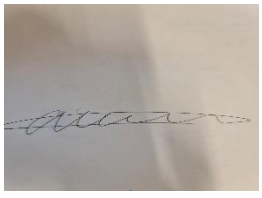
APPROVED:

Research Supervisor: _Dr. Ulviyya Mikayilova

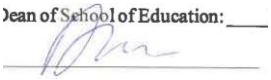
_____ _____

Committee member: Dr. Sarvar Gurbanov

Committee Member: _Dr. Anar Valiyev



Dean of School of Education: ____Dr. Vafa

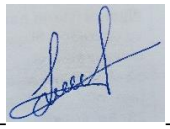


Kazdal_____

Date: _____24.07.2020_____

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I have read ADA's policy on plagiarism and certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis, entitled (insert title here), is all my own work and does not contain any unacknowledged work.

Signed: ____  _____

Date: ___24.07.2020_____

MAEM Thesis Project Report Form

Student's Name: Aygun Isgandarova

Program/Degree/Curriculum Master of Arts of Leadership and Management in Education

Project Title: Use of Teaching Strategies in Higher Educational Institutions for Graduate Employability

Date of Defense: 12.06.2020

Time of Defense: 10:00 am

Abstract

University graduates in Azerbaijan currently face significant employability issues. Since 1993 to 2017 there was a steady decline in employment of students from 53% to 45%. The research shows that there are several reasons for this decline and teaching strategies is one of them. To understand this issue, I conducted a multi-phase study with the aim to investigate how universities cultivate graduate employability and the role of teaching strategies in this process. Three population groups, employers, university students, and university instructors participated in this study. The study was conducted at ADA University and partner organizations with ADA University. A total of 39 adults representing three population groups took part in my study. A multi-phase research design was employed, which consisted of three phases: qualitative study with employers, a mixed methods study with students, and a qualitative study with instructors. Data were collected using questionnaire, interview protocols, and focus group protocol.

The findings obtained from the research allowed to claim that teaching strategies affect employability of graduates. Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to enhance employability of graduates, which is confirmed by the results obtained from students. Students also think that they enter the job market with the certain set of skills and knowledge. However, according to employers these skills either are not adequate or do not fully meet the demands of current job market. This shows that there is a gap between job market and universities, which might be due to inadequate communication between these two parties. Thus, I recommend to strengthen the communication between the job market and universities in order to fully meet employers' requirements. In addition to this, it is necessary to emphasize the role of teaching strategies for the growth of graduates' employability skills by adopting internal policies. This also demands to

support and increase university teachers' capacity to cultivate graduate employability through various professional development events.

Keywords: requirements of the labor market, graduate employability, students' perceptions of employability, higher education, effective teaching strategies.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Graduate employability is considered as a long-term scheme to enrich "professional well-being and career development" of university students (Kumar, 2007, p. 136). Given this importance, it is crucial for universities to give students ability to find or create work after they graduate. The concept of graduate employability refers to jobs that students are able to quickly find right after graduating a university (International Student Survey, 2019). According to the International Student Survey 2019 results, 58% of respondents choose universities with high employment ranking, 56% of respondents go to universities which promote going into students' preferred industry, and 58% of respondents prefer universities that enable them to quickly find a job right after graduating. Thus, it is a key deciding component in future students' decision-making process regarding the choice of university. The scope of graduate employability also decides where in the ranking the university stands.

Building students' employability with relevant and timely work necessitates analysis of employer indicator as well. The Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) stress that higher educational institutions lie at the heart of the services that should help students of all disciplines develop marketable skills, which are skills necessary in a workplace and skills that have instant value for employers (e.g. soft and hard skills, numeracy and literacy skills), (Archer & Davis, 2008). Notwithstanding this, according to International Employer Barometer (IEB), 30% of employers report their dissatisfaction about common employability skills of graduates (Archer & Davis, 2008). They claim that recent graduates generally lack team-working, communication, and problem-solving skills. 86% of employers consider acquisition of soft skills as a relevant factor of employability, as many graduates find it hard to express themselves.

The aim of this thesis was to find answer to the question of how universities in Azerbaijan cultivated graduates' employability and the role of teaching strategies in this process. To answer this question I studied local job market's requirements from graduates for successful employability; students' preferences for, perceptions of, expectations from university; and university instructors' perceptions of their teaching strategies regarding graduate employability.

Problem Statement

Although Azerbaijan has experienced substantial expansion in education in the last several decades, productivity of human capital in the country is low (Moreno & Patrinos, 2020). According to the data obtained from Azerbaijan's 2015 Monitoring Survey for Social Welfare (AMSSW), 69% (1,378,019) of samples completed high school, 20% (138,308) higher education, and only 10% did not complete high school (Moreno & Patrinos, 2020; World Bank, 2019). Tertiary education plays a significant role in earning differences as well, meaning that people graduating from universities are more advantageous to find a job (Killen 2006) and earn 1.4 times more than people with primary education (Moreno & Patrinos, 2020). Although studies on higher education show that completing higher education has many benefits in terms of finding a job in the market and earning more than those without a degree, university graduates still face a challenge to find a job in the domestic labor market after graduation. According to Human Capital Index, only 9% of university graduates in Azerbaijan are employed, which is lower than global figure (10%) (Moreno & Patrinos, 2020; World Bank, 2019). Similarly, today, many employers in Azerbaijan complain that they face challenges to find workers with marketable skills (Moreno & Patrinos, 2020; Nasrullayeva-Muduroglu & Jafarli, 2013). Thus, it is common to see many university graduates, who experience difficulties to find a job after they graduate. In other words, low employability of

graduates is a problem in this country (Moreno & Patrinos, 2020; Nasrullayeva-Muduroglu & Jafarli, 2013).

In order to understand what affects employability of graduates, literature review was done. The literature review helped identify several major factors that hinder employment of university graduates such as: a) poor course quality; b) poorly-thought and designed teaching methods of university instructors; c) university ranking and reputation; and d) students' perceptions of, preferences for, and expectations from higher education. Unemployment rate was considered constant and not focused on during the whole study. The focus of the study was to investigate how universities cultivated graduate employability by studying phenomena such as the local market's requirements, students' perceptions of and expectations from higher education to be successfully employed, and university instructors' teaching strategies promoting employability of graduates. One of the assumptions was that application of teaching strategies that were proven effective (e.g., visualization, cooperative learning, inquiry-based instruction, high-tech teaching, student-centered learning, etc.) (Kameenui & Carnine, 1998) develop university students' marketable skills required by employers. Investigation of the domestic labor market's requirements gave relevant insights of what is required from graduates to possess in order to be considered eligible for the employment. At the same time, study of the perceptions and expectations of students from universities gave a light to understand their choice of universities. Finally, exploration of a particular university teachers' current teaching methods helped determine what teaching strategies were applied at the university and how they built employability skills of graduates.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Exploration of employability opportunities of graduates in terms of employer requirements, student perceptions and expectations, and teaching strategies was done through reviewing of literature mainly from American, UK, and Australian scholarly journal articles and books. As long as the number of works regarding proven practices and evidences of relationship between higher education and industries in the mentioned countries is ample, the review mainly concentrated on the works from those countries. Keywords such as effective teaching strategies, employer requirements, education and graduate employability, student needs and expectations were used to find related scholarly works.

Employability is a set of basic skills needed for ongoing process of personal and professional development (Cai, 2013; Rosenburg, Heinmber, & Morote, 2012; Yorke, 2006), which is built in education and further developed in a workplace or in extracurricular activities (Arrow, 1973; Spence, 1973). In other words, employability is a possession of necessary accomplishments and abilities acquired by a graduate in higher educational institutions to function in a workplace (HIllage & Pollard, 1998; Nauta et al., 2009). Although the number of young people who enter tertiary education mainly Bachelor's degree and similar since early years of the first decade of the 21st century has increased, the number of youth being in employment is still low (Hoskins, Leonard, & Wild, 2018). Since 1993 until 2017 there was a steady decline in employment of students from 53% to 45% -8% for males and 10 % difference for females (Hoskins, Leonard, & Wild, 2018). Many indicators have been reported to affect youth employment. Expansion of universities is considered as one of major factors creating significant delays in youth employment. Race, gender, field of study, relevance of the major of a graduate in the market, skill development, and quality of knowledge acquired at higher education have been identified to affect

graduate employability (Hoskins, Leonard, & Wild, 2018). In my study I mainly focused on indicators skill development and quality of knowledge acquired at university to promote better employability skills for graduates. However, in order to understand how universities can promote employability skills, first, it is significant to identify what labor market requires (Taylor, 2016). A survey conducted by International Employer Barometer (IEB) in the UK among 233 employers representing 750.000 employees and a statewide survey conducted in Australia aimed to explore how employers conceptualized employability opportunities of graduates and what criteria they looked for in a graduate (Jackson, 2014; Archer & Davis, 2008). The results of both surveys revealed almost similar findings. The findings showed that employers defined graduate employability as a set of softs skills rated by 86% of employers; overseas professional work experience- by 60%, and numeracy and literacy skills in graduates-by 70% (Archer & Davis, 2008); and work experience, institutional reputation/image, and course quality were found as the most significant factors that contribute successful employability of graduates (Jackson, 2014). Analysis showed that soft skills namely communication and team-working skills were most valued skills by over 85% of employers among other skills treated in the study. In the study conducted in Azerbaijan, employers mainly complained that recent graduates could not express themselves effectively, because they lacked good communications skills (Nasrullayeva-Muduroglu & Jafarli, 2013). At the same time ability to work in a team was another major skill employers emphasized. They indicated that in a customer concentrated world being a part of a team and being able to communicate with everyone effectively was very important. A number of other similar surveys conducted at different times by Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) in 1995 and more recent- National Council for Work Experience (NCWE), found the same skills to be more significant to be employable (Pegg, et.al, 2012; Archer & Davis, 2008).

Overseas education experience was found to be a significant factor that promoted successful employability of graduates by UK employers (Archer & Davis, 2008). One in six UK employers indicated that graduates had studied abroad had more chances to be employed, because they had more experience knowing more diverse people and could help bring creativeness and innovation to local organizations. Yet, numeracy and literacy skills were rated high only by UK employers.

University's image was another major factor that contributed to employability of graduates. Jackson (2014) advocates that 24.8 % of graduates were employed due to their institutional reputation in the society, which means employers when encountered with graduates from reputable universities recruited them without delays. Such universities were usually found to be the ones with research-intensive background, top-ranked, and elite universities. According to some scholars (e.g., Levine, 1980; Packard 1959; Baltzal, 1958), the term elite universities and schools serve to identify an education sector, which provides knowledge to children of upper wealthier class. However, not all scholars (e.g., Randal, 1994; Ravitch, 1991) agree that there should be clear distinction between upper class schools (elite) and other schools. Yet, according to Jackson (2015), elite institution means an exceptionally selective educational institution with well-received reputation in the society, with extremely high rate of graduation, top overall ranking education sectors, and very high ranking programs.

Course quality is thought to be another major factor that is regarded to contribute evidential data for graduates to make reasonable claims to be recruited. According to Knight et al. (2003), application of best practices is designing, teaching, monitoring, assessing, and modifying a course to achieve student outcomes.

Skill gap and skill shortage

A number of other reports of individual employers (e.g. Mincer, 1991) showed that employers could not find employees that had required skills. Studies reported that employers faced problems with filling in vacancies with right people (Capelli, 2015). Inability to find right candidates for vacancies is called "a skill gap" (Capelli, 2015, p. 252). A series of research (Mincer, 1991) conducted in the US labor market showed that, most employers stated that although universities' major role was to build marketable skills in graduates, they failed to provide students with basic skills. Among valued skills communication skills, ability to question facts, analytical and problem solving skills took the first place in ranking. Cappelli (2015) introduced this term to emphasize the role of education in enhancing students' employability skills prior to employment, regardless of further development of employees in a workplace by internal requirement of organizations.

Another economic term, which is called "skill shortage" introduced by Cappelli, (2015, p. 252) indicates to the job-related skill deficiency in graduates. These skills are the ones that differ from organization to organization and refer to the lack of relevant field-related knowledge and skills by graduates. Similar to previous studies, the most appreciated skills in this study were soft skills (communication), thinking skills (analysis, critical thinking, problem solving), ability of candidates to offer innovative approaches to work (Cappelli, 2015), and finally discovery-based skills (Cappelli, 2015; Susman, 2015). Lack of these skills in candidates is called "skill problems" (Cappelli, 2015, p. 253), which lead to job mismatches. Employers identify mismatches as the primary source of business inefficiency and the cause of productivity scarcity.

Students' Perceptions of, Preferences for, and Expectations from Higher Education

Education has experienced big changes in terms of student needs and expectations (Long & Tricker, 2004). Today, it is not strange to find that students in the first place expect to get value

for their investment (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013). The value was identified by students as sufficient contact hours, resources available, quality education, student development, and infrastructure. One of the critical points in students' return of investment in education is career prospect (Ribereau-Gayon & D'Avray, 2018; Kandiko & Mawer, 2013). The main purpose for entering tertiary education was to improve students' career opportunities. Students expect to get career/employability opportunities through courses they take by developing their employability skills and experience that will be necessary for employment. Among skills students expect to get are subject-based practical skills as well (International Student Survey, 2019; Ribereau- Gayon & D'Avray, 2018). Work placements and internships are found to be of utmost importance for students, as these components of education help students get experience that employers seek (Long & Tricker, 2004). The findings of International Student Survey (2019) show that 32% of students choose a university, which has quality career services and that create opportunities for graduates build networks with employers. While, 38% of students who participated in the survey stated that they preferred universities, which had high employment rate, 29% preferred universities with work placement.

It was long time ago when teachers were the only people who were active during the whole session. Today, students expect to be equally actively involved in the education process. They expect to get a two-way communication with the university they study at and their instructors. The relationships between teachers and students that focus on exchange of knowledge and ideas are considered as the foundation of quality teaching and learning experience (Ribereau- Gayon & D'Avray, 2018). It is a significant factor to take into account when choosing a university. According to the data obtained from 2019 International Student Survey, 49% of students high quality teaching was one of the most important factors they considered when they chose a higher

educational institution (International Student Survey, 2019). Although studies (e.g. Kandiko & Mawer, 2013) report that students expect to be exposed to advanced technology as a means of education, they prefer teachers to be there as pedagogues.

Various efforts have been made to determine which skills university graduates think they have. The Futuretrack survey was conducted among higher educational institutions in the UK where students were asked to state the skills they had developed in higher education against the skills sought-after by employers (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). The purpose of the study was to identify which skills the students possessed to offer the labor market. As a result of this study, it was clear that students thought they had developed the following skills to offer: research skills, specialist knowledge; critical-thinking skills, written communication skills; ability to apply knowledge; independence; and logical thinking with the percentage range 45%-35% (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). Whereas, the market required spoken and written communication skills, team-work abilities, integrity, good ethics, and self-management (Hinchcliffe & Jolly, 2010; Archer & Davison, 2008). Eventually, the study stated that in order to eliminate this discrepancy between businesses and higher educational institutions, the two parties needed to establish strong relationship and increase their collaborative activities to invest in employability of graduates (Atfield & Purcell, 2010).

Effective Use of Teaching Strategies

As emphasized by employers from various studies, higher educational institutions lie at the heart of services that should cultivate employability opportunities for graduates. Therefore, institutions providing education must understand the vitality of collaboration between education and industries and prepare a considerable number of highly qualified candidates for economic market by using various approaches in teaching in higher educational institutions (Shapiro, 2009).

Various approaches in education means application of different teaching strategies that were proven effective by studies in order to meet employers' requirements and graduates' needs (Killen, 2006). Effective teaching strategies is a set of teaching approaches aimed to achieve institutional goals and improve student outcomes (Killen, 2006; Ornstein & Lasley, 1990). Some of student outcomes are improved academic performance, self-efficacy, confidence (Killen, 2006), marketable skills such as soft skills, critical-thinking skills, and analytical thinking (Jackman, 2014), and other employability opportunities (Bridgstock, 2009). There are several teaching strategies such as student-centered teaching, teacher-centered, differentiated instruction, inquiry-based teaching, and high-tech teaching approach (Entwistle, Hanley, & Hounsell, 1979), outcomes-based teaching, visualization, high quality teaching model (Killen, 2006) and many others, which help students acquire those outcomes. For example, teacher-centred approach is defined as Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) way of teaching, where a teacher is in the center of the class (Yuen & Hao, 2009). Whereas, student-centred approach makes students and a teacher equally active in the classroom (Lea, Stephenson, & Roy, 2003). Inquiry-based approach is identified by Weaver, Russel, and Wink (2008) as an approach where students explore answers to questions on their own, rather than teachers tell them what to know. The approaches mentioned above can be explained broadly and argued upon largely as well. Each of the approaches develops certain skills in students. Yet, no single teaching strategy alone is successful all the time and for all the learners at the same time (Killen, 2006). The main reason is that teaching and learning processes are multi-dimensional. It does not mean that if one learner cannot learn, s/he does not have enough potential to learn, but it means the teaching strategy applied by the teacher is not helpful for this learner at this period of time (Lovat & Smith, 2003). According to Killen (2006), there is a number of factors contributing and/or hindering teaching-learning processes, which are

not fully understood, and not all the factors are under teachers' control. Nevertheless, there is enough information about teaching and learning processes and how to use that information in order to build quality set of principles and guidelines based on which effective teaching can be founded (Marzano, 2003). Thus, it is important for every teacher to explore learning styles of their learners and develop strategies according to those characteristics. Eventually, teachers will end up applying several teaching strategies and practices to achieve learning outcomes (Killen, 2006). According to Atkins and Brown (1988), teaching is creating prospects for students to learn. Learning does not occur in vacuum. It happens systematically, with well-thought structure and purposes. Content of learning process may vary from teacher to teacher but the most acceptable elements are providing students with facts, procedures, ideas, visions, values, and questioning of all mentioned elements of the content (Atkins & Brown, 1988). Cole and Chan (1986) state that an effective teacher is one who applies a particular set of practices that have sequence, consistency, and significance in the specific teaching context that are addressing to maximize student achievements. In order to understand what type of teaching strategy to apply to increase personal, academic, and professional student learning outcomes, it is necessary to explore what learning is. According to a number of scholars (e.g., Ahlberg, Aanisma, & Dillon, 2004; Clark, 2003; Martin, Gersik, Nudell, & McMillan-Culp as cited in Killen, 2006; Nightingale & O'Neil, 1994), there are several learning characteristics such as meaningful, deep in the sense, metacognitive, and transformative. The scholars suggest that effective teaching strategies should be developed in a way that they incorporate these characteristics of learning into teaching. Bearing this in mind, a teacher should recognize these learning characteristics and create an environment where the shared information by the teacher is not only known and understood by learners, but this knowledge is also applied by them to solve problems. This knowledge should also be effectively communicated and

understanding of the information should be demonstrated not only in the classroom but also outside of it. Additionally, the learning environment should allow learners to remember knowledge for a long time and to develop skills such as analysis, synthesis, and questioning of facts. Finally, a teaching strategies can be considered effective if they stimulate learners to be academically curious and passionate to learn more (Killen, 2006).

According to Jackson (2014), effective teaching methods play critically vital role in fostering graduates employability skills. Effective teaching methods do not only include disciplinary/subject-based knowledge and field expertise, but also aim to develop skills such as self-awareness, soft skills, commitment, problem-solving, research-based and technological skills, and self-management that are mainly acquired in higher education (Jackson, 2014). Thus, in order to improve professional well-being and career development of graduates, it is vital to cognize what kind of teaching methods are employed in an institution and to what extend those methods promote employability skills of students.

Finally, going back to teaching strategies, a teacher might have a favorite strategy to teach learners. The favored teaching strategy might be student-centered, inquiry-based, or teacher-centered, in any case, no single teaching strategy can be viewed as the best among all the others in all circumstances. An effective teacher is the one who is able to use a variety of teaching strategies and knows when each one is most likely to be effective (Killen, 2006). The purpose of teaching is to be able to rationally decide what a teacher wants his/her learners to do with shared information. Does a teacher want to teach learners to see practice as a use of theory or is it teaching students that the theory is an instrument to understand applications? An effective teacher will know that information or a theory should be taught in a way that it is converted into knowledge and skills, which later will be applied both inside and outside the classroom (Killen, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate how universities promote university graduates' employability opportunities in terms of teaching strategies. To study this question through employers' requirements, students' preferences for, perceptions of, and expectations from universities to be employed, and university instructors' perceptions of teaching strategies they apply to prepare graduates for the job market were investigated. To my knowledge, very few empirical studies have been conducted to investigate effective teaching strategies and graduate employability in Azerbaijan. Therefore, it is significant to study whether students and faculties see higher educational institutions as the relevant source that provide graduates with employability skills in Azerbaijan as well.

Research Questions

1. How do universities in Azerbaijan cultivate graduates' employability and the role of teaching strategies in this process?
    a) What are the employers' requirements from university graduates for successful employability?
    b) What are students' preferences for, perceptions of, and expectations from university to be employed?
    c) Do university instructors perceive that their teaching strategies cultivate graduate employability?

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

A multi-phase research design has been employed to study how universities cultivate graduate employability and the role of teaching strategies in this study. Multi-phase design has gained popularity among many academicians for its many benefits, such as detailed exploration of the problems, comparison of various viewpoints, analysis of all forms of findings, and understanding the problems in-depth (Creswell, 2012).

In this study, I collected both qualitative and quantitative data to explore participants' requirements, perceptions, needs, expectations, choices, and actions with employability. The whole study is divided into three phases. In the first phase I conducted qualitative research-interview with employers of various organizations: public, private, and international. As long as employers are people, who could inform about the job market's requirements, they were studied in the first phase. Interview with employers informed me about the main themes that I later used in the student survey and focus group discussion with students. Finally, in the third phase independently from the previous studies, I conducted a qualitative study-interview with university instructors to explore their perceptions of their teaching strategies and their effect on student learning outcomes, namely graduate employability. Therefore, multi-phase research design helped me answer the main research question and all three sub-questions.

Methodology

This section provides information about participants, instruments, procedures of data collection, and data analysis.

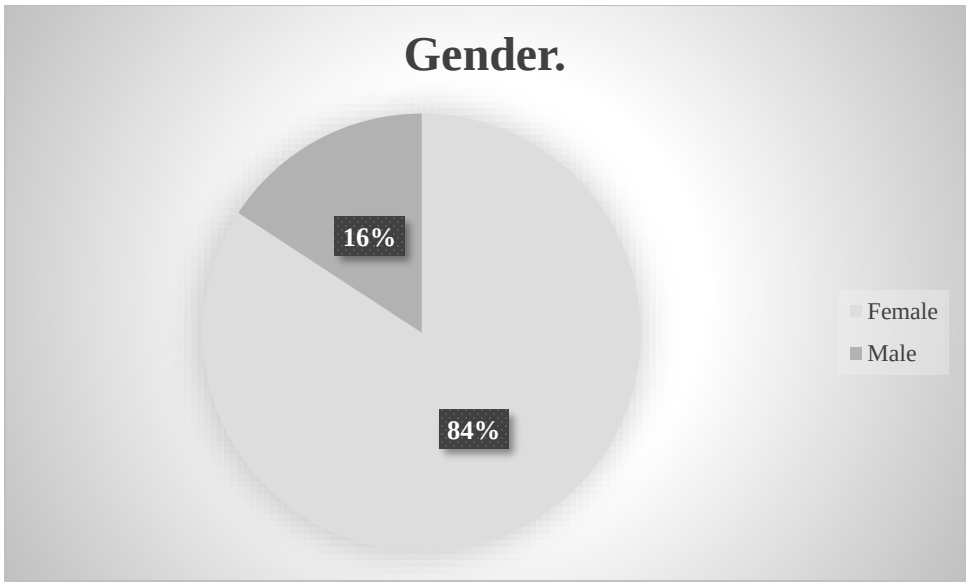
Participants

In this study I recruited three types of participants: employers, university students, and university instructors.

Employers. In order to answer the first sub-question, I purposefully recruited senior HR officers and managers of employee recruitment and training departments. These businesses represent organizations that have partnership relations with ADA University. ADA University was selected through convenience sampling, as I am a current student in this particular university. I requested private, public, and international organizations on purpose to have the voices of all stakeholders. Yet, particular organizations were selected through convenience sampling based on their availability and willingness. As a result, four employers representing one public, two private, and one international organizations participated in my study. In the study I referred to them as employers, because they were directly involved in selection process of employees.

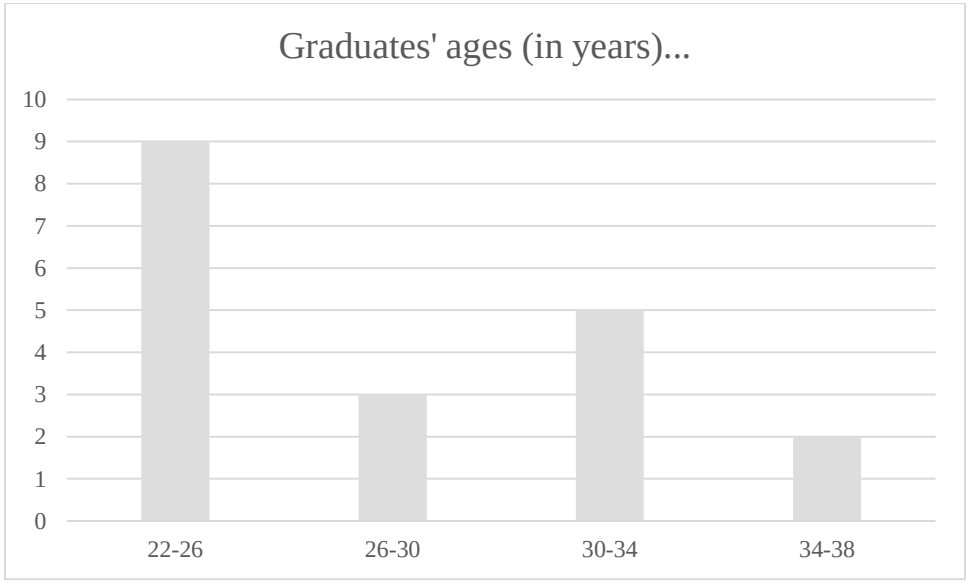
University students. Second type of participants were ADA University students. I used purposeful sampling to recruit the student-participants from four schools. Although I aimed to recruit 20 students from four schools- School of Education, School of Business, School of IT and Engineering, and School of Diplomacy and International Affairs, I ended up having 19 students from three schools. 10 out of these 19 students participated in the focus group discussions. The students represented School of Education, School of Diplomacy and International Affairs, School of Public Administration. As it is obvious from table 3.1, the vast majority of respondents were females- 16 females and 3 males.

Table 3.1. *Gender of the respondents*



Age. Age of all respondents that participated in the study ranged from 22 to 38 as shown in table 3.2.

Table 3.2 *Graduates' ages in years*

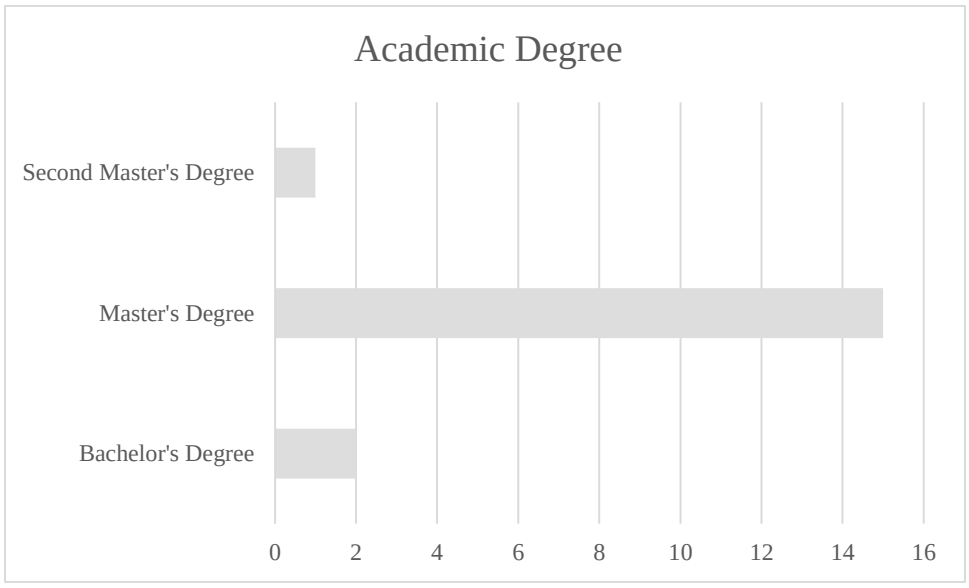


The vertical axis shows the number of graduates and the horizontal line represents age ranges of the graduates.

Academic degree. N=16 out of 19 selected students (84%) were doing their first Master's Degree, 1(5%) was doing their second Master's degree, and 2 (10%) were doing their Bachelor's

Degree (see Table 4.5). N=16 out of 19 selected students (84%) were taking their Master's program in Education Management, while 2 students (10%) were in Diplomacy and International Affairs Program, and 1 student (5%) was in Public Administration.

Table 3.3. *Graduates' Academic Degrees*



University instructors. For the last phase, I recruited instructors from ADA University. Initially, I recruited six teachers from the same schools that students were recruited- School of Education, School of Public Administration, and School of Diplomacy and International Affairs. I used purposeful sampling while selecting university instructors: I personally knew three of them, and three others were selected from ADA website. While sampling participants I focused on instructors who were more or less the same age, held their doctoral degrees, and had publications. I also ensured equal number of female and male participants in the study

Instruments

To answer the research questions I used four instruments: interview protocol for employers, student questionnaire, focus group interview protocol for students, and interview protocol for instructors.

Interview protocol for employers. The interview protocol consisted of seven questions (see Appendix A). I developed interview questions for employers myself. The key questions explored: a) employers' requirements from university graduates; b) which skills should be taught at universities; and c) their perceptions of how higher educational institutions cultivated employability skills of graduates.

To check the validity of my instrument, I sent the interview protocol to two people with research background. They reviewed the items to see whether they answered my research question. The questions were consistent with the research question, Later, I tested my questions with two people to verify whether the items used to explore the participants' opinions were understandable. The piloting proved that the questions were easy to understand and answer.

Student questionnaire protocol. I developed survey items based on the answers of the previous instrument- interview protocol for employers. This was an online survey e-survey creator and consisted of 13 close-ended items (see Appendix B). Cross-sectional survey design was used to research key items related to existing opinions about the instructors' teaching strategies, effectiveness of teaching strategies, and students' perceptions whether the university promoted their employability skills. In addition to this, students' age, gender, time spent on formal learning at university were also studied. Ready questionnaires created by other scholars were not utilized in this research. The types of items were Likert scale rating, multiple choice, yes-no questions.

Furthermore, I piloted my questionnaire to understand how valid it was. The items in the survey questionnaire would be judged reliable if students chosen to test the items in the questionnaire stated that the questions were understandable (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For this purpose, I chose three students (apart from the students participating in the study) to do pilot

study. All of the data were analyzed and evaluated by the survey link after the respondents completed them.

Focus group interview protocol for students. This instruments consisted of six questions (see Appendix C). The questions were about students' perceptions of, preferences for, and expectations from the university they studied; their perceptions of the job market's requirements, and skills they got at university. Similar to the interview protocol for employers, the focus group interview protocol was also sent to two people with research background to have them reviewed. Later, I piloted it with two students, who did not participate in the study.

Interview protocol for university instructors. The interview protocol for university instructors was developed by me and consisted of seven questions that focused on getting relevant information about the instructors' opinions on their teaching strategies and how their teaching techniques prepared university graduates for the labor market (see Appendix D). Ready interview protocols were not utilized in this study. For the purpose of validity, the similar steps were undertaken. The protocol was reviewed by two people with research background and piloted with one university teacher to see whether the questions were easily understood.

Data Collection

This section describes the steps of data collection. Only interviews with employers were conducted in Azerbaijani. The rest were conducted in English.

Individual interviews with employers. I first sent an email of invitation for selected employers (see Appendix E), where I introduced myself, gave relevant information about my research, goals, objectives, and how long the interview would last; and invited them to participate in my study. Informed consent was attached to the email (see Appendix F). Once I got approval

from the employers to participate in my research, we appointed time for our face-to-face meeting via email.

Before the interviews started, I gave the participants the informed consent forms to be signed by both parties. After reminding the purpose of my study and interview, I started conduction of the semi-structured individual interview. Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes and was audio recorded.

Student survey. I sent online invitation to selected students and included a link to my survey. Once the questionnaire was piloted, I sent the survey questionnaire to my research participants. Due to COVID-19 outbreak, I contacted selected students via Whatsapp mobile application and Facebook social networking site. I explained the purpose of my research and sent them the link to complete the survey. In the beginning of the survey I included a short paragraph about participant confidentiality. The survey questionnaire was sent to 20 students. 19 students returned the filled out survey questionnaire.

Focus group discussion. 10 out of these 19 students participated in the focus group discussion. I contacted them via phone calls and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook). The rationale behind this choice was to examine students' perceptions of, preferences for, and expectations in-depth, because open-ended question in the survey would not let me get extensive understanding of these variables. I conducted focus group discussion via Zoom. It lasted 45-60 minutes to discuss the questions. It was video recorded. The time of the meeting was negotiated with each student and the common time for the meeting discussion was scheduled.

Individual interviews with instructors. I first sent an email of invitation to each instructor (see Appendix G) with the informed consent attached to it. The email contained all necessary information about the purpose of my research, their role in my study, and the choice for

online application used for meeting. Once I got their approval of participation, the time of interview was negotiated with each of them. I conducted semi-structured interviews via Zoom and Skype. Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes and all of them were video recorded.

Data Analysis

All data were analyzed right after each data collection. All qualitative data were transcribed. As long as the language of data collection was mainly English except for the interview with employers, which was in Azerbaijani, data collected from employers only were translated into English. Later, I read the transcripts, classified the themes, and organized the data per research question. I manually coded each theme in Excel.

Quantitative analysis was done by using online panel- e-survey creator. The survey program evaluated and analyzed all the responses; I filtered and organized the analyzed data. Finally, I drew similarities and differences across all four data sets–employers, student survey and focus group discussion, and university instructors, analyzed them and interpreted.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter includes two sections: findings and discussion of the findings.

Findings

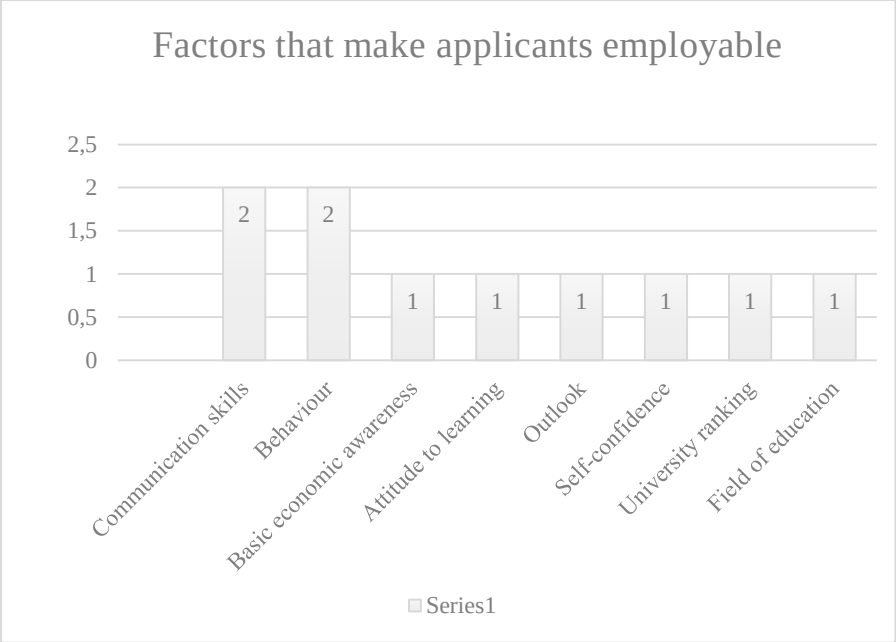
This section of the chapter outlines the findings of both qualitative and quantitative research conducted in the local context, which targeted to collect data per research question and sub-questions. First, this chapter includes information about the findings from the interview with employers' requirements in the local market from university graduates. Second, the survey results with students about their perceptions on the university's teaching strategies are demonstrated. Next, focus group discussion findings with students about their needs and expectations from the university to be successfully employed are discussed. Finally, the interview results with university instructors about their perceptions on how their teaching strategies promoted graduate employability are highlighted further in the chapter.

The main research question is discussed in the discussion section. This section of the chapter reports the analysis of the data collected to answer the research sub-questions.

Employers' requirements from university graduates for successful employability.

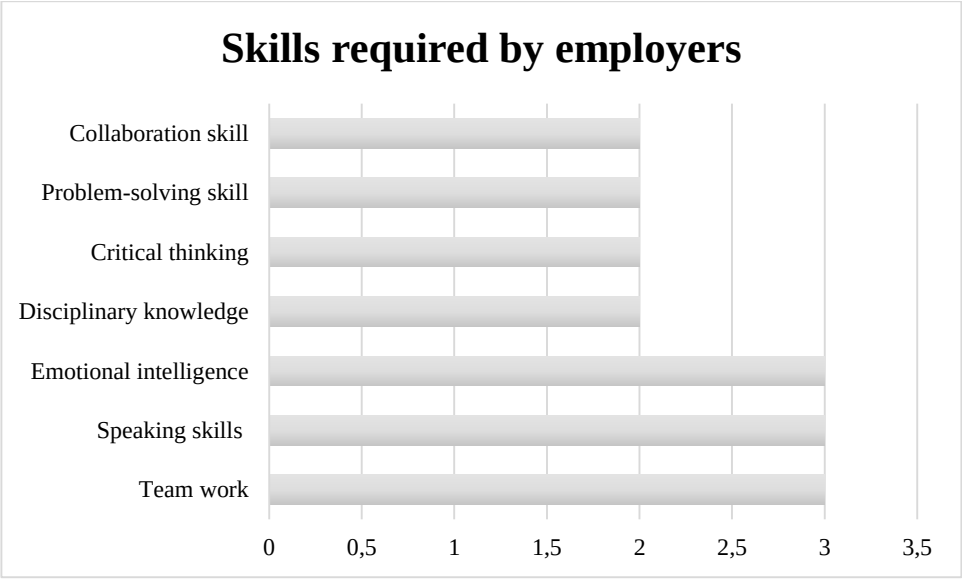
Factors of employability. The employers were asked to identify what factors made graduate applicants employable. As it is seen from table 4.1, employers mentioned communication skills and behavior as the most necessary factors that made an applicant employable. By behavior they referred to the way employees met ethical norms of conduct. Basic economic awareness, students' attitude to learning, outlook, self-confidence, university ranking, and field of education were also considered important by fewer number of participants.

Table 4.1 *Factors that make graduates employable*



Skills necessary for employment. As it is clear from table 4.2, speaking skills, team-work skills, and emotional intelligence were considered by the employers as the most significant skills being repeated by three employers in order to be successfully employed. Yet, collaboration, problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and disciplinary knowledge were considered important by few employers.

Table 4.2. *Skills required from graduates by interviewed employers*



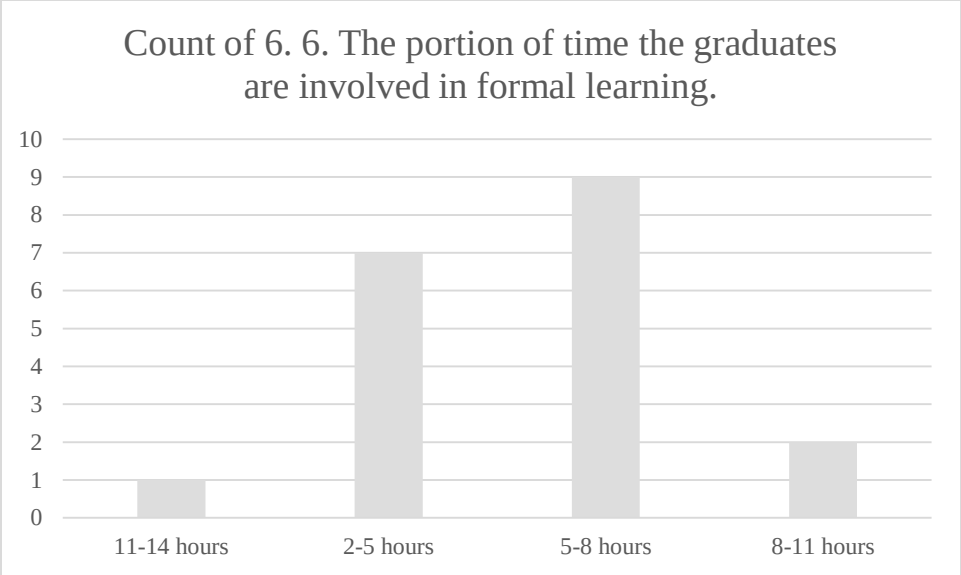
The vertical line shows skills required from graduates by the employers.
The horizontal line shows how many times each skill is mentioned by the employers.

All four employers agreed that university should provide students with disciplinary knowledge, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills. However, they expressed their concern that higher educational institutions could give students disciplinary knowledge but failed to provide practical skills related to this knowledge. The employers believed that universities and the teachers in higher educational institutions were important agents that should teach students all necessary skills that would promote their employability skills. They also believed that university gave students only disciplinary knowledge. Thus, employers conducted in-job trainings to develop necessary knowledge and skills in their employees. According to the employers, as long as higher educational institutions failed to provide students with necessary skills and knowledge, organizations came up with their own solutions and opened their own training and development departments, where they trained both new and old employees to fulfill each type of a job/position.

Students' perceptions of, preferences for, and expectations from university.

The number of hours students involved in formal learning. The table below shows the number of hours the respondents were involved in formal learning. As it is clear from table 4.6, the majority of the respondents spend 5-8 hours per day on formal learning. While seven students reported being involved in formal learning for 2-5 hours, two students- from eight to 11 hours, and only one student spent 11-14 hours on learning.

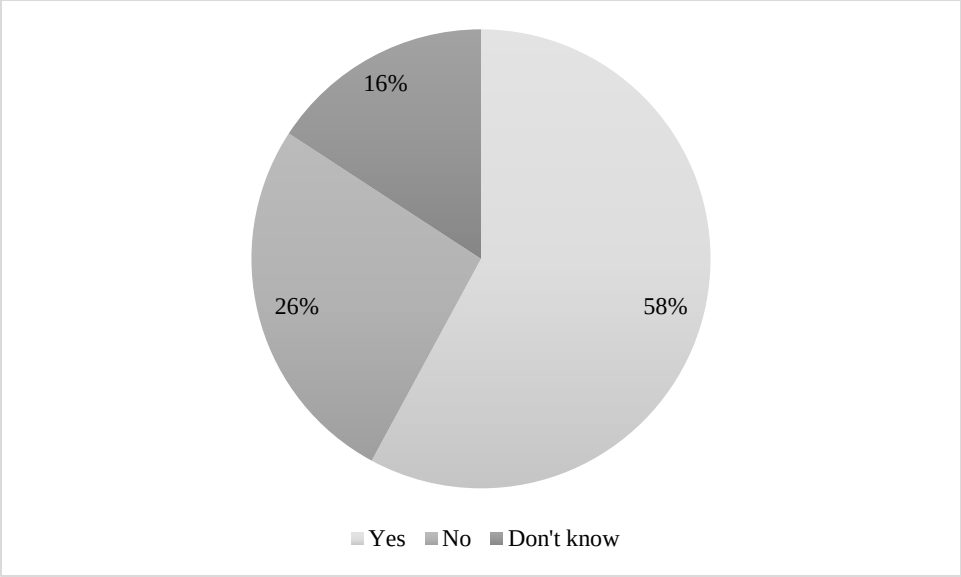
Table 3.4 *Length of time the respondents involved in formal learning*



Employability of graduates. 11 (58%) students were employed and 8 (42%) were unemployed. 10 participants (90%) reported being employed in the field of their studies, whereas 1 participant (9%) reported to work in a job, which was not aligned with their fields of education.

Students' perceptions of whether university cultivated their employability skills. The respondents were asked whether their university instructors' teaching strategies promoted graduate employability. As it is clear from the table below, out of 19 respondents 58% respondents believe that higher education prepares them for or ensures their better employability, while 26% disagree, and only 16% do not know answer to this question.

Table 4.7. *Students' perceptions on whether university promotes their employability skills*



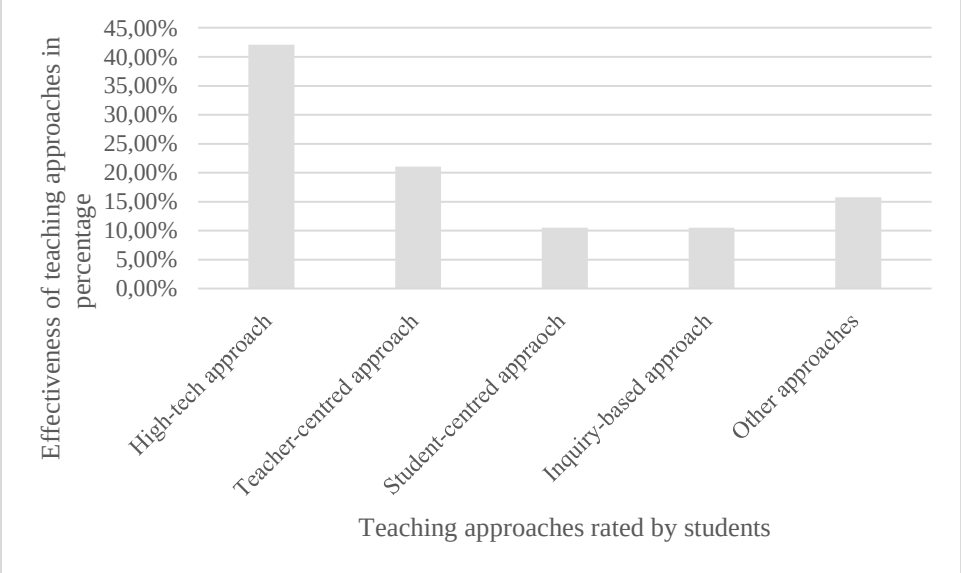
University instructors' teaching strategies and their alignment with the local market's needs. The respondents were asked whether their university instructors were familiar with the market's requirements and aligned their teaching strategies so that they could enhance development of marketable skills of graduates. 52% of the respondents agreed including strongly agree, 37% students disagreed including strongly disagree, and 10% students were not sure whether teachers at their university recognized the importance of close collaboration of education with industries in the labor market and designed their classes accordingly. The vast majority of students prioritized three skills as important to be taught at this university-communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.

Teaching strategies taught at the respondents' university. The respondents were asked to share which teaching strategies were applied by their instructors at the university. While 68% of respondents believed student-centered approach was used by teachers to achieve acquisition of the skills such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking, change-management, and action-planning skills. 57% of the samples agreed that inquiry-based approach was used by teachers to help students acquire these skills, and 42% think high-tech approach was

employed by teachers to acquire these skills, only 21.5% believed that teacher-centered approach was used to pursue above-mentioned skills.

Students' opinions about teaching strategies applied by their instructors and their effectiveness. The respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the following teaching strategies applied by their instructors: Student-centered, teacher-centered, inquiry-based, and high-tech approach. According to the respondents' rating high-tech approach was considered as the most effective teaching strategy with 42% rating. The other strategies 'effectiveness was scattered around as the following: teacher-centered approach with 21%; student-centered and inquiry-based approaches each at 10%; and other approaches (the names were not mentioned in the survey) at 15%.

Table 4.8. *Students' opinions about university's teaching strategies and their effectiveness*



Students' perceptions of the skills that should be taught at university. 95% N=18 out of 19 believe competencies such as critical thinking, problem solving, change-management, action planning, communication skills, and speaking skills should be taught at higher educational institutions. Only 5% N=1 out of 19 students believe that those skills should be taught elsewhere.

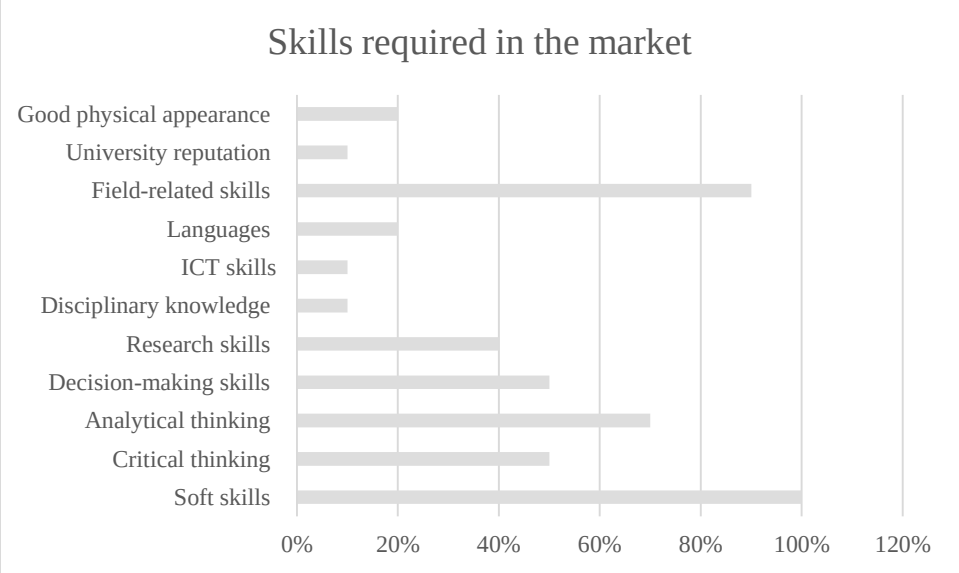
Students' expectations form the university. The students were asked what they expected to get from the university they were at to be successfully employed. More than half of the respondents said they expected to get practical skills or subject-related skills. For example, students graduating from MAEM should be well-equipped with both disciplinary knowledge of education policies, assessments, educational issues in the country; leadership skills, financial skills, and basic economic skills. They said they got theoretical knowledge at university, but they expected to get practical skills, and knowledge about educational issues and policies, which would enable them to be better employed in the market. 20% of the respondents said they expected to do internship for the purpose of networking and getting practical skills from the organization they were doing their internships. They thought if their internships were organized the way that enabled them to work on challenging tasks that their on-site mentors would give, they would have better chances to practice challenges they would face in the future once they were employed in those organizations. 20% of the students mentioned they expected to get leadership skills, organizational behaviour skills, problem solving, and research skills. Only 10% of the students expected strong cooperation between students and career services at the university. Another 10% expected high-quality education. Explained that high-quality education was the combination of disciplinary knowledge with theory-based knowledge.

Students' preferences. In the study one in three students preferred to go to a high ranking university for better employability opportunities. 10% of students preferred to a get a degree from a top university.

The market's requirements from the students' perspective. The respondents were asked whether they were familiar with the market's requirements. All the students said that they were partially familiar with the market's requirements. 80% of students learned those requirements from

the internet – job announcements, job search sites, and professional job sites such as Linked- in. 20%- learned from job interviews they were either invited or heard from a friend. The students also mentioned ICT skills, soft skills (communication skills, team-work skills, creative-thinking, and problem-solving skills), analytical-thinking skills, field-related skills, university reputation, languages, and good physical appearance as the main requirement of the market.

Table 4.10 *Skills required from the labour market from graduates' perspective*



When the participants were asked if the university they were at provided them with these skills, they responded that the university could partially teach them the skills, mainly research skills, critical-thinking skills, and disciplinary knowledge.

According to responses, the instructors at university managed the application of various teaching strategies to develop and enhance certain marketable skills. Courses on inquiry, economy, law, educational policy, and organizational behaviour and development were held in more student-centred, inquiry-based, and high-tech teaching and learning environments. They helped develop research skills, critical-thinking skills, analytical-thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making

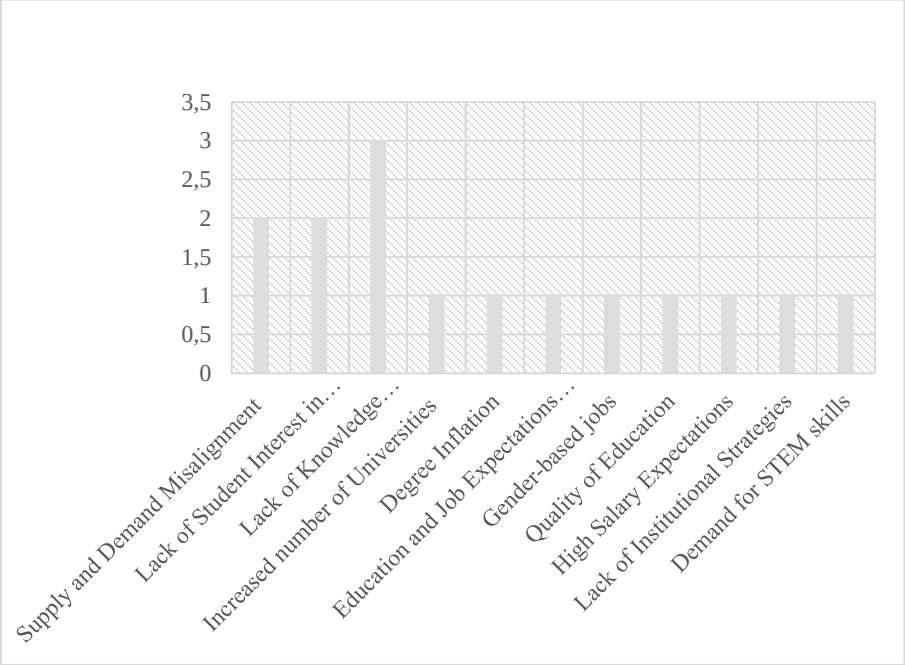
skills. Internship in its turn gave the students an opportunity to gain subject/field-related practical skills and create relevant networks.

University instructors' perceptions of teaching strategies they apply to promote graduate employability.

Relationship between teaching strategies and graduate employability. Two out of four respondents agreed that there is a relationship between teaching strategies and graduate employability. They explained that their teaching strategies should develop students' critical thinking, analytical thinking, and communication skills that later would help them in their lifelong process and help them be employable. One respondent said that there isn't a relationship between teaching strategies and graduate employability for two reasons: institutionally the university doesn't have any policies regarding teaching strategies aimed for student employment; culturally-students are not inclined to take initiatives and study on their own as well. They want everything from teachers. Yet it is impossible to make a teacher to teach everything considering the fact that students do not want to learn. And one interviewee said "don't know" whether there is a relationship between these two variables.

Reasons of students graduating from university and not being in employment. The respondents were asked to share their opinions about the possible reasons of university graduates not being employed. The skills that instructors believe university graduates in general (graduates of many higher educational institutions) do not possess are: critical thinking, analytical thinking, marketable skills, communication skills; ability to present themselves. As it is seen from the table 4.5, several possible causes of this imbalance were mentioned. The most relevant reasons considered by the instructors were graduates' lack of knowledge and skills (soft skills, critical and analytical thinking), lack of student interest in learning, and supply and demand misalignment.

Table 4.7 *Reasons of graduate unemployment*



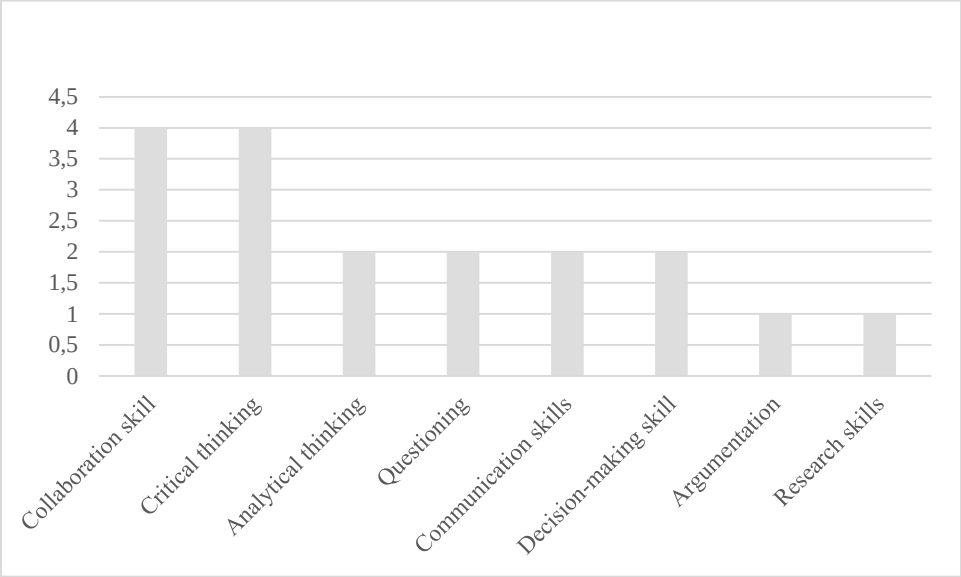
The horizontal line shows factors mentioned by the respondents. The vertical axis shows the number of times each factor is mentioned.

***Teaching strategies and techniques applied by the instructors*.** The respondents were asked to choose which of the listed teaching strategies they favored (student-centered, teacher-centered, inquiry-based, and high-tech approaches). Three out of four respondents said they use the mixture of teacher-centered, student-centered, high-tech, and inquiry-based approaches in their classes. They use these approaches interchangeably depending on the topic, content, and student needs. Only one respondent uses learning-centered approach and some of above mentioned teaching strategies depending on the content. Techniques most used in classrooms by teachers: gaming, projects, group works, debates, and case studies. All the techniques were stated to mostly rely on research.

Skills formed in students. The respondents were asked to share the skills they witness their students acquired as a result of their teaching strategies. As it is clear from table 4.6, collaboration

and critical-thinking skills were cited by all the respondents to have been formed as a result of their teaching strategies. Analytical thinking, decision-making, communication skills, and questioning were witnessed to be formed by fewer number of respondents- only two, whereas argumentation was mentioned by only one respondent to be the result of their effective teaching strategies.

Table 4.8 *Skills formed in students*



The scope of impact of effective teaching strategies on graduates. The respondents were asked to what extent their teaching strategies prepare their learners for labor market. Three of the respondents claimed that their teaching strategies and techniques contributed to the acquisition and development of personal, academic, and professional student learning outcomes. Two of the respondents stated that they could witness some of their students acquire and increase self-confidence, self-efficacy, and critical-thinking skills. One of the instructors said that s/he witnessed that some of his/her students became more committed to studying. In addition to this, they were also influenced by his/her passion to teach so much that they also decided to stay at the university

and become instructors and academicians. Professionally, the knowledge and skills the instructors develop in their students promote their employability skills.

Discussion of Findings

The study showed findings similar to the literature in terms of employability opportunities. It is worth to note that both instructors and students knew what factors made graduates employable. Compatible to the previous studies, research of employers', students', and instructors' perceptions of graduate employability, this current study found good communication skills and university ranking to be the most important factors of employability opportunities (Jackson, 2014; Archer & Davis, 2008). Yet, different from previous studies, this study also found that several other factors such as good behavior, basic economic awareness; attitudes to learning, outlook, supply and demand alignment; student interest in learning; strong soft skills; and field of education were also identified as indicators of employability opportunities.

Another similarity with the literature was about employer requirements from graduates. Findings showed that team-work abilities, good communication skills, good speaking skills, critical-thinking skills, analytical-thinking skills, field-related skills, research skills, and problem solving skills were the most required factors from graduates to be employable. According to employers, graduates entered the market either without relevant skills, or with skills and knowledge that were not required by the market. The findings of this study showed that recent graduates were not able to communicate with all staff members, express their opinions professionally; work in teams, able to do research, find solutions to problems on their own, and think critically. Employers complained that though most recent graduates possessed quality disciplinary knowledge, they were unable to demonstrate their knowledge, present themselves

during the selection process, and apply their knowledge in practice. According to them, lack of good speaking skills and being emotionally unintelligent either made them overreact to some questions or be merely unable to answer. Ability to demonstrate acquired knowledge in practice was a big issue in most graduates, mainly for those who entered the university with scores above 650. During the discussion employer one said:

> Sometimes it happens with candidates, who study a lot both at school and at university. By studying I mean only reading the materials given by their instructors and memorizing them. When we ask them questions to learn about their subject-based knowledge, we hear a lot of terms. Yet when it comes to apply that knowledge into practice, they fail. It already informs about the wrong education system.

Findings showed that not only at selection level, but also during employment graduates with skill problems faced difficulties. The lack of ability to communicate with other staff on desired emotional level and work in teams created problems among workers as well, which in its turn negatively affected the flow of work in the organization. Similar to the literature about skill gap, this study confirmed the employers complained about graduates not being able to solve problems on their own. They would come up to their senior staff members to ask for help to find solutions to even small issues, though they were expected to be able to do research and find their own solutions. Such candidates were in the list of less desired candidates. As a result, such employees would be fired in a short period of time, once good supplementary candidates were found.

However, the study of students and instructors showed that both participants believed graduates entered the job market with certain skills and knowledge that were required in the job market. This finding contradicts the results obtained from employers. Both of the participants

believed that they could develop and offer the world of business the following skills and knowledge: disciplinary knowledge, research skills, team-work skills, soft skills, critical-thinking skills, and analytical-thinking skills.

Similar to the literature, students expected to get value for their investment in terms of career prospect (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013). Findings form this study showed that students expected from the university to get high quality disciplinary knowledge and to develop their marketable skills in order to meet the market's needs. The students stated that they expected to develop these skills and acquire knowledge by doing internships and subject-related practical tasks and assignments.

This study showed that while the employers thought that graduates were exposed to passive learning only, the research of students' and instructors' perceptions revealed that students were exposed to many teaching-learning approaches. Evidently, there is a contradiction between employers and students/instructors perspectives on teaching strategies. Some of the approaches mentioned by my participants were teacher-centered, student-centered, inquiry-based, learning centered, game-based, debates, high-tech classes, group and pair works, and case studies. The findings demonstrated that students' opinions were primarily divided into two categories in terms of effectiveness of each teaching strategy. While some students thought that student-centered approach in line with high-tech approach were found the most effective teaching strategies. They were used to develop certain skills such as communication, collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking, change-management, and action-planning skills. The second group of students thought that inquiry-based teaching was used to acquire above mentioned skills. According to the students, their instructors were able to develop certain marketable skills by stating particular courses. For example, research-based classes helped them develop research skills, critical thinking, and

analytical thinking through various assignments. The results of these assignments led to advancement of above-mentioned skills. Courses focusing on acquisition of analytical-thinking skills were conducted in a more student-centered and research-based class environments, such as courses on economy, law. Acquisition and development of problem-solving and decision-making skills were also done in a more student-centered classroom environment through courses such as educational policy and organizational behavior and development. Similar to the findings obtained by Long and Tricker (2004), this study found that students thought that internship helped them a lot in terms of gaining subject/field-related practical skills and creating networks.

To the contrary, instructors believed effectively utilized mix of all mentioned teaching strategies and techniques helped them cultivate graduates' relevant skills and knowledge. The instructors witnessed the effects of their teaching strategies and techniques on their students. The effects were self-efficacy, self-confidence, commitment, further education, experience, and employability. It is worth sharing these interesting facts revealed by the results of analysis of an ADA university instructor's opinion about the scope of the impact their teaching strategies have on their students.

> I manage to develop some skills in students. Students mostly remember the materials I teach in the classroom environment. When they go to the market and when they face certain issues, they remember what I taught them and they thank me. Additionally, some of my students today want to be academicians at the university. Because they see how I love my job, they see the passion, and it affects them positively.

Moreover, the study of ADA instructors' perceptions of the relationship of university education with graduate employability revealed interesting findings. The university institutionally did not have an employability strategy. It means that teachers intuitively realized the importance

of graduate employability and tried to develop students' marketable skills. However there is no reinforcement of this strategy, no policies, or regulations of monitoring and evaluation of acquisition of those skills. Instructors could only evaluate the impact of their teaching strategies on their students according to the completed assignments, students' jobs, and positions in a workplace.

Finally, the current study revealed that teaching strategies applied by the instructors of ADA helped cultivate graduates' employability skills. Yet, the findings also revealed that institutionally they were not required to establish and/or develop graduates' employability skills, but they did so based on their own initiative. The findings obtained from both ADA students and instructors, confirmed that students exposed to the mix use of above-mentioned teaching strategies and techniques formed soft skills, research skills, critical thinking, analytical thinking, and collaborations skills.

Evidently, there is an alignment between instructors' and students' perceptions of skills developed at university. Yet this contradicts opinions of employers participated in the study. Although instructors claim that they try to develop employability skills of graduates, these skills do not fully meet job market's requirements. This might be due to the inadequate communication between university and the job market.

Conclusion

According to the literature review and the findings of this research, effectively used mix of teaching strategies and techniques plays a significant role in the establishment and/or development of knowledge and skills of students for successful employment in the domestic labor market. The

study revealed that graduates, who possessed marketable skills such as soft skills, critical-thinking skills, good speaking-skills, emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills, disciplinary knowledge, subject-based practical skills, and research skills had more chances to be employed. Thus, I recommend that universities in Azerbaijan including ADA University, realize the vitality of and accept graduate employability as a part of their responsibility, and lay down this requirement in their internal policy regulations. In addition to this, universities should support and build their instructors' capacity to increase and develop graduate employability through various professional development events. Another aspect is to strengthen communication between job market and universities to consider employers' requirements for future employees.

Despite these findings, there are some limitations to my study as well. It is difficult to generalize the findings to the university or the whole country. The idea was to conduct a preliminary study with a smaller sample size to identify some key dynamics in the relationship of education with industries (regarding graduate employability), which would draw a path for future studies. Consequently, the sample size in each research phase was small and the findings are not referred either to the whole university or the country. The findings obtained from employers do not demonstrate collective opinions of employers in Baku. Similarly, neither the sample size of the university students represented the whole number of students at the university, nor was the number of instructors big enough to represent all the teacher staff of the university.

The current study also revealed the need for a bigger research. Initially, one of the assumptions was that discrepancy in the use of effective teaching strategies led to poor employability skills. As long as the study was limited to only one of the top universities of Azerbaijan, which was popular for its image in the country, it is possible to state that teaching strategies of the instructors applied at this university cultivated graduate employability. Yet, to

substantiate that the biggest contribution to graduate employability was made mainly owing to teaching strategies of the university instructors is hard at this point. Therefore, I recommend to study this question in the future research by sampling more participants from industries and universities or other higher educational institutions located not only in Baku, but also in other regions of Azerbaijan. Eventually, it is necessary to identify whether teaching strategies positively affect employability of graduates, or the image of university plays a crucial role in the employment of graduates. The future study may also reveal other new phenomena that were not indicated in this study.

References

Åhlberg, M., Äänismaa, P., & Dillon, P. (2005). Education for Sustainable Living: Integrating theory, practice, design, and development. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *49*(2), 167-185.

Atkins, M., & Brown, G. (1988). *Effective teaching in higher education*. London and New York: Routledge. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/adaaz/detail.action?docID=169052.

Atfield, G., & Purcell, K. (2010). Graduate labor market supply and demand: Final year students' perceptions of the skills they have to offer and the skills employers seek. *Institute for employment research, University of Warwick. Future Track*, 20.

Arrow, K. J. (1973). Higher education as a filter. Journal of Public Economics, 2, 193-216.

Archer, W., & Davison, J. (2008). Graduate employability. London: *The council for Industry and Higher Education*.

Australian Association of Graduate Employers [AAGE]. (2012). 2012 AAGE Employer Survey. Sydney: AAGE

Baltzell, E. D. (1958). Philadelphia gentlemen: The making of a national upper class. Chicago: Quadrangle Paperback

Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *28*(1), 31-44.

Brown, P. and Hesketh, A. (2004) *The Mismanagement of Talent – employability and jobs in the knowledge economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cai, Y. (2013). Graduate employability: A conceptual framework for understanding employers' perceptions. *Higher Education, 65*(4), 457-469. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.ada.idm.oclc.org/stable/23470832

Cappelli, P. (2015). Skill Gaps, Skill Shortages, and Skill Mismatches: Evidence and arguments for the United States. *ILR Review, 68*(2), 251-290. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.ada.idm.oclc.org/stable/24810346

Chan, L. K., & Cole, P. G. (1986). The effects of comprehension monitoring training on the reading competence of learning disabled and regular class students. *Remedial and Special Education, 7*(4), 33-40.

Clark, I. L. (2003). *Concepts in composition: Theory and practice in the teaching of writing*. Routledge.

Coates, H., & Edwards, D. (2011) The Graduate Pathways Survey: New insights on education and employment outcomes five years after completion of a Bachelor degree. *Higher Education Quarterly, 65*(1), 74-93

Corcoran, J., Stimson, R., & Li, T. (2011) Locational Patterns of New Graduate employment and Regional Economic Performance in Australia. *International Journal of Foresight and Innovation Policy, 7*(1/2/3), 44-55

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th Ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Creswell, J., & Plano Clark, V. (2007). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Entwistle, N., Hanley, M., & Hounsell, D. (1979). Identifying distinctive approaches to studying. *Higher education, 8*(4), 365-380.

Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998). Employability: developing a framework for policy analysis. Research Report RR 85. UK Department of Education and Employment

Hoskins, B., Leonard, P., & Wilde, R. J. (2018). Negotiating uncertain economic times: Youth employment strategies in England. *British Educational Research Journal, 44*(1), 61-79.

Jackson, D. (2014). Factors influencing job attainment in recent Bachelor graduates: Evidence from Australia. *Higher Education 68*(1), 135-153. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.ada.idm.oclc.org/stable/43648705

Kameenui, E. J., & Carnine, D. W. (1998). *Effective teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learners*. Prentice-Hall Inc., Order Processing, PO Box 11071, Des Moines, IA 50336-1071.

Kandiko, C. B. & Mawer, M. (2013). Student Expectations and Perceptions of Higher Education. London: King's Learning Institute

Killen, R. (2006). *Effective teaching strategies: Lessons from research and practice*. Cengage Learning Australia.

Knight, P., ESECT, et al. (2003). Briefings on Employability 3: The contribution of LTA and other curriculum projects to student employability. York: HEA

Kumar, A. (2007). Personal, Academic and Career Development in Higher Education - SOARing to Success. London, New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis

Lea, S. J., Stephenson, D., & Troy, J. (2003). Higher education students' attitudes to student-centred-learning: beyond educational bulimia?. *Studies in higher education*, *28*(3), 321-334.

Levine, S. B. (1980). The rise of American boarding schools and the development of a national upper class. Social Problems, *28*(63-94).

Long, P., & Tricker, T. (2004). Do first year undergraduates find what they expect?

Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. ASCD.

Mincer, J. (1991). *Education and Unemployment* (No. 3838). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Moreno, G., V., & Patrinos, H. A. (2020). Returns to Education in Azerbaijan: Some New Estimates. Policy Research Working Paper.

Nasrullayeva-Muduroglu, N., & Jafarli, A. (2013). Labour Market in Azerbaijan. 16. Baku: American Chamber of Commerce in Azerbaijan.

Nauta, A., Van Vianen, A., Van der Heijden, B., Van Dam, K., & Willemsen, M. (2009). Understanding the factors that promote employability orientation: The impact of employability culture, career satisfaction, and role breadth self-efficacy. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *82*(2), 233-251.

Nightingale, P., & O'Neil, M. (1994). Defining quality. *Achieving quality learning in Higher Education*, 7-14.

O'connor, B. P. (2000). SPSS and SAS programs for determining the number of components using parallel analysis and Velicer's MAP test. *Behavior research methods, instruments, & computers*, *32*(3), 396-402.

Ornstein, A. C., & Lasley, T. J. (1990). *Strategies for effective teaching*. New York: Harper & Row.

Packard, V. (1959). The status seekers: An exploration of class behavior in America and the hidden barriers that affect you, your community, your future. New York: David McKay.

Pegg, A., Waldock, J., Hendy-Isaac, S., & Lawton, R. (2012). Pedagogy for Employability. York: HEA

Randall, E. V. (1994). Private school and public power: A case for pluralism. New York: *Teachers College Press.*

Ravitch, D. (1991). Different drummers: The role of nonpublic schools in America today. *Teachers College Record*, *92*(409-414).

Ribéreau-Gayon, A., & D'Avray, D. (2018). Interdisciplinary research-based teaching: Advocacy for a change in the higher education paradigm. In Tong V., Standen A., & Sotiriou M. (Eds.), *Shaping Higher Education with Students: Ways to Connect Research and Teaching* (pp. 139-149). London: UCL Press. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt21c4tcm.23

Rosenberg, S., Heimler, R., & Morote, E. (2012), Basic employability skills: a triangular design approach. Education and Training, 54 (1):7– 20. Retrieved from ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/adaaz/detail.action?docID=4356811.

Created from adaaz on 2019-12-11 09:10:42.

Shapiro, H. T. (2009). *A Larger Sense of Purpose: Higher education and society*. Prinston University Press. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Smith, D., & Lovat, T. J. (2003). Curriculum: Action on reflection. *New South Wales: Social Science Press*.

Spence. M. (1973). Job market signaling. Quarterly Journal of Economics, 87(3), 355-374.

Taylor, L. E. (Ed.). (2016). *How to develop your healthcare career: A guide to employability and professional development*. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Teixeira, R. M. (Ed.). (2011). *Higher education in a state of crisis*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/adaaz/detail.action?docID=3017820.

Teichler, U. (2009). Higher Education and the World of Work: Conceptual frameworks, comparative perspectives, empirical findings (Global perspectives on higher education. Vol. 16). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Thomson, S. (2003). Creating High-Performance School System. *The Phi Delta Kappa, 84* (7), 488-495. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/20440401.

Weaver, G. C., Russell, C. B., & Wink, D. J. (2008). Inquiry-based and research-based laboratory pedagogies in undergraduate science. *Nature chemical biology*, *4*(10), 577-580.

World Bank. 2019. Human Capital Index. Washington DC: World Bank.

Yorke, M. (2006). Learning and Employability – Employability in Higher Education: What is it-What is it not. Higher Education Academy. York, UK

Yuen, K. M., & Hau, K. T. (2006). Constructivist teaching and teacher-centred teaching: A comparison of students' learning in a university course. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *43*(3), 279-290.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Employers

Interviewer: Aygun Isgandarova

My purpose in talking to you today is to learn more about your thoughts and feelings employing criteria in the market today. Anything you tell me will not be attributed to you in any reports that result from this study. All of the reports will be written in a manner that no individual comment can be attributed to a particular person. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. Are you willing to be interviewed?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Questions

1. What factors differentiate employable from non-employable?
2. What specific skills do you look for in a candidate for employability?
3. Are employability skills inherent or can they be taught? If they can be taught, then where can they be taught?
4. Which skills should be taught at universities? Which skills can be taught in a workplace? Why?
5. If you look back at your own higher education experience, what skills and knowledge were you taught? How were they taught? Were they helpful in finding a job? What skills that you possess helped you to be where you are now?

6. How do you think how well higher educational institutions prepare their students for life in the information-rich world of employment? Why do you think so?

7. Do you think teaching skills, such as teaching to think critically, to conduct researches promote better employability skills? If so, why?

Appendix B

Student Survey

https://www.esurveycreator.com/s/6cd3932

For example,

Is your work related to the field of your study? *

◯ yes

◯ no

The portion of time you are involved in learning. *

Please choose...

Choose your field of study. *

Please choose...

Please, read the following statement and indicate your response by choosing the appropriate option. *

Teachers at this university recognize the importance of close collaboration of education with industries in the labor market and design their classes accordingly.

Appendix C

Focus Group Interview Protocol for Students

1. What is the return of your investment in education?
2. What do you expect to acquire at University in order to be successfully employed?
3. Are you familiar with the market's requirements in order to be employed? If yes, how and where did you learn that?
4. Which of these skills and knowledge do you need to be successfully employed?
    - Soft skills
    - Critical thinking
    - Analytical skills
    - Decision making skills
    - Research skills
    - Technical knowledge
5. Do you think the university you study at provides you with these necessary skills and knowledge?
6. Which courses you take do you think cultivate marketable skills?

Appendix D

Interview Protocol for Instructors

Interviewer: Aygun Isgandarova

My purpose in talking to you today is to learn more about your thoughts about the teaching strategies you use in your classrooms and how they help develop graduate employability skills. Anything you tell me will not be attributed to you in any reports that result from this study. All of the reports will be written in a manner that no individual comment can be attributed to a particular person. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. Are you willing to be interviewed?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

1. Do you think there is a relationship between teaching strategies and present domestic labor market? If yes, elaborate on that, please.
2. Looking at current statistics of students' employment and student graduation, it can be implied that there is a huge imbalance between them. What do you think is the main reason of such an imbalance? (Since 1993 until 2017 there has been a steady decline in employment of students from 53% to 45%).
3. Do you agree that higher educational institutions should prepare their students for labor market? Was it the same in the past 10 years, or is it different now? If it is different, can you say to what extend it varies?

4. Do you employ any specific teaching approaches that you think work well on achieving both professional and personal student learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes)? If yes, can you name them and explain the reason behind your choice?
5. What kind of skills in your students are formed owing to your teaching strategies?
6. Which of the techniques used by you in the classroom enhance the development of the skills such as collaboration, communication, problem-solving, change-management, and decision-making skills?
7. What do you think about traditional teacher-centered approach, student-centered approach, high-tech and inquiry-based approaches? Do they help improve students' employability skills? Which of them does and which does not? If yes, how? If no, can you name any other alternative approaches that help both form and develop certain employability skills in graduates?

Appendix E

Email of Invitation to Employers

I am Aygun Isgandarova, a MAEM 2020 student at ADA University. I am doing MA Thesis on the topic "Effective Teaching Strategies for Higher Employability of Graduates". I am kindly inviting you to participate in my research, where I am currently studying what faculty instructors think of teaching strategies as a whole and which teaching strategies they employ to achieve specific student learning outcomes. The interview consists of seven questions and it will take 35-40 minutes to answer them. Your participation in my research is crucial, as you are the people, who know the market well and can make suggestions to make important improvements to the higher education system. Both your name and affiliation will be kept confidential, only your valuable insights about the issue will be used in the research If you agree, please let me know when you are available, so that I can schedule you in order to avoid overlaps with other participants.

Thank you beforehand!

Appendix F

Informed Consent

Participant Code: _____

ADA University

Participant Informed Consent

Title: Education and Economy: Effective Teaching Strategies in Higher Education for Higher Employability of Graduates

Student Researcher: Aygun Isgandarova

Date: 29/04/2020

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

The purpose of this MA Thesis is to get detailed understanding of cause and effect relationship between effective teaching strategies and higher employability.

PROCEDURES:

There will be several elements for this research: You will be asked to share your opinions, perceptions and knowledge about the questions during the interview.

Time required: 30-45 minutes

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:

There are no anticipated risks to participants

BENEFITS:

Although this study may not benefit you personally, but I believe the results will help teachers and lecturers enhance their teaching strategies in order to produce more skilled workforce.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You choose whether to participate in the study. If you decide not to join, there are no consequences, and you will not lose any advantages to which you would otherwise be labeled.

You can stop participation in the study at any time, without any consequences or loss of benefits. If you want to withdraw from the study, please contact _055 455 79 76_ via phone or email: isgenderaygun@gmail.com.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of ADA University and these people are required to keep your identity confidential. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

All videotapes and measures will be examined by the Student Researcher and research affiliates only (including those entities described above). No identifiable information will be included in any reports of the research published or provided to school administration. A participant number will be assigned to all surveys and the student's achievement scores.

Surveys will be collected in either electronic or paper format. Survey data completed electronically will be collected via a password protected MyAda.edu.az account that belongs to ADA University. If the student is unable to complete the surveys electronically, paper copies will be provided. In both electronic and paper format, these data will not include identifiable information.

Video data of the classroom interactions may be transcribed by an outside agent (transcriptionist), who will de-identify all transcripts by deleting all names from the transcript and only a participant number or pseudonym will be included on these transcripts.

All research data including paper surveys and videotapes will be kept in a locked office. Electronic data will be stored on the Student Researcher's computer, which is password protected. Any original tapes or electronic files will be erased and paper documents shredded, ten years after collection.

Only group data will be included in publication; no individual achievement data will ever be published.

COMPENSATION:

You will not receive any payment or other compensation for participating in this study.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:

You can ask questions about this research study at any time during the study by contacting Aygun Isgandarova via phone_055 455 79 76_ or email: isgenderaygun@gmail.com.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or feel that you have not been treated fairly, please call the ADA University at (012) 437 32 35.

SIGNATURES

WHAT YOUR SIGNATURE MEANS:

Your signature below means that you understand the information in this consent form. Your signature also means that you agree to allow your child to participate in the study. Your child's signature indicates that he or she agrees to participate in the study.

By signing this consent form, you have not waived any legal rights you otherwise would have as a participant in a research study.

_____

_____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix G

Email of Invitation to University Instructors

I am Aygun Isgandarova, a MAEM 2020 student at ADA University. I am doing MA Thesis on the topic "Effective Teaching Strategies for Higher Employability of Graduates". I am kindly inviting you to participate in my research, where I am currently studying what faculty instructors think of teaching strategies as a whole and which teaching strategies they employ to achieve specific student learning outcomes. The interview consists of seven semi-structured questions and it will take 35-40 minutes to answer them. Your participation in my research is crucial, as you are the sole person who directly communicates with students and knows what works well in acquisition of employability skills and what needs improvement as a result of a particular teaching strategy. Both your name and affiliation will be kept confidential, only your valuable insights about the issue will be used in the research. Due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, I cannot ask you to meet face-to-face. Thus, I would like to ask you if it is possible to meet via any video application (Blackboard Collaborate, Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp video Call) that suits you, which will enable us to meet virtually and get the interview done. If you agree, please let me know when you are available, so that I can schedule you in order to avoid overlaps with other participants. Thank you beforehand!