

## **Employability Skills: Students' Perspectives Post Work Placement Experience**

**Authors :** Mamie Y. Griffin, Pedro Coelho

**Abstract :** Employability skills of university graduates remain an ongoing topic for discussion and debate. Numerous studies highlight the expressed concerns of governments and industries about higher education's ability to develop workforce-ready graduates. An often cited solution is the use of internships to equip students with necessary employability skills. The literature is well documented with studies from the perspectives of multiple entities including employers and university faculty, mostly in the western world. Fewer studies examine the perception of students, and even fewer studies are based on students in Gulf countries. This paper assesses the status of employability skills from the perspective of students within a United Arab Emirates (UAE) institution based on their completion of a semester-long work placement experience. Using a largely qualitative instrument, students reported the essential skills needed in the workplace, classroom activities that most prepared students to use such skills in the workplace, and the various challenges they encountered. Implications for academic and professional practitioners are discussed. Findings and recommendations are informative for curriculum development as well as economic and workforce development agencies.

**Keywords :** employability skills, work placement experience, Gulf countries, workforce preparedness, work placement

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