EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSURING INTERNAL QUALITY OF NON–STATE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN SRI LANKA TOWARDS GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

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EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSURING INTERNAL QUALITY OF NON-STATE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN SRI LANKA TOWARDS GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract

The demand for higher education has been increased significantly, and inconsequent to this, the public universities are not in a position to cater for that demand fully. The main objective of this particular research study was to develop a framework that supports enhancements in graduate employability through a well-established internal quality assurance (IQA) system which is directly applicable to the existing structure and policy environment of non-state universities in Sri Lanka.

The study has chosen survey strategy because it seeks the opinion of employers on graduate attributes and effectiveness of IQA process in NSHEIs. Positivist research is the most commonly aligned with quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The deductive method is used to construct a relational hypothesis and to find answers. The unit of analysis is the individual as a researcher interested in individual employers in the organization for data collection. Data collected through a questionnaire survey among 150 employers in nearly 30 companies (as a pilot survey) which have industry partnerships with those 19 Non-state HEIs based on convenience sampling.

The research outcomes revealed that all independent variables are having a strong positive association with graduate employability. Hence, graduate employability can be increased through a well-established IQA framework that consists of teaching, learning, assessments and professional development. Further, Academic performance and Field of specialty have a

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mediating and moderating effect on the relationship between IQA framework and graduate employability respectively.

Keywords: Higher Education, Internal Quality Assurance, Graduate Employability.

1. Introductıon and Objectives

The demand for higher education has been increased significantly, and inconsequent to this, the public universities are not in a position to cater for that demand fully (University Grants Commission, 2018). The non-state higher education institutes (NSHEI) have a key role to play in this context by creating more and more opportunities. Nevertheless, one must take care of the potential employability of those graduates to pass-out to make sure that need is addressed in the best and sustainable manner (Barrie, 2007). The main objective of this particular research study was to develop a framework that supports enhancements in graduate employability through a well-established internal quality assurance (IQA) system which is directly applicable to the existing structure and policy environment of non-state universities in Sri Lanka.

2. Research Methods

Following (Barrie, 2007) potential relationship between a number of factors (i.e. independent variables), including Teaching, Learning, Assessments, and Professional Development and Graduate Employability (Dependent variable) was developed into a conceptual framework (Figure 1)
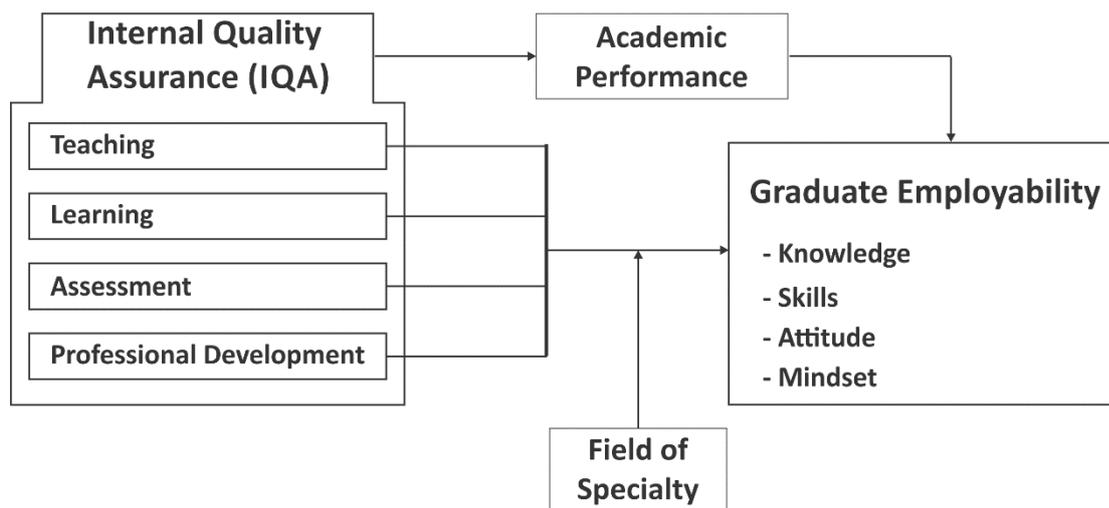
Figure 1 – Conceptual Framework for the Research (Source: Literature Review)

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3. Results and discussion

All the variables are having Cronbach's alpha values more than 0.6. It indicates that there is an internal consistency between the variables. Therefore, variables can be created to the corresponding items included in the questionnaire.

Mean values of variables are very close to the Likert scale 4. Hence, responses concerning to the variables are in agree with level. The highest variance belongs to 'learning' as the minimum

standard deviation is 0.63. Minimum variance belongs to 'assessments' as the minimum standard deviation is 0.54. All the coefficients of skewness are between -1 and +1 which indicates that the data are normally distributed. Absolute values of kurtosis are less than three (3) times of standard error of kurtosis that also represents that data is normal. All the probabilities are highly significant between the Graduate Employability (Dependent variable) and independent variables. Coefficients of correlation between them are positive. Their values are more than 0.7 which means that teaching, learning, assessments and professional development are having a strong positive association with graduate employability.

Multiple correlations "R" is 0.920, which indicates that there is a strong joint association between the individual factors and graduate employability. R-square is 0.846, this indicates that 84.6% of graduate employability (dependent variable) has been covered by the model. As the value is more than 60%, the regression model is nicely fitted. Adjusted R-square is also representing that 83.9% of the dependent variable has been covered by the model. Durbin-Watson test statistic is 1.918, which is very close to 2 and will be between 1.5 and 2.5. Therefore, residuals are independent and the model is valid.

Probability of F test statistics of the regression ANOVA is highly significant as the P-value is 0.000. This means that the model is jointly significant and independent factors jointly influence on graduate employability. Therefore, the model is appropriate. Probabilities of Teaching, Learning, and Assessments are highly significant (less than 0.01) with positive beta values and significantly influence positive on graduate employability. Professional Development is marginally significant and positively influence on employability.

All the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) are less than 10 and it indicates that independent factors are not highly correlated. Therefore, no multicollinearity problem in the regression model and the model is highly valid. As the p values are insignificant, residuals are normally

distributed with zero mean values. Thus, the results are highly valid. According to all these diagnostic tests, regression results are highly valid.

4. Conclusions

The research outcomes revealed that all independent variables are having a strong positive association with graduate employability. Hence, graduate employability can be increased through a well-established IQA framework that consists of teaching, learning, assessments and professional development. Further, Academic performance and Field of specialty have a mediating and moderating effect on the relationship between IQA framework and graduate employability respectively.

Therefore, the model is directly applicable to the existing structure and policy environment of NSHEIs in Sri Lanka. Further, it is suggested that, to be effective, an IQA system needs strong leadership and institutional commitment towards quality enhancement.

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