

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

**EXPLORING THE INTEGRATION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS TRAINING IN
UNIVERSITY DEGREE PROGRAMMES FOR GRADUATE WORK READINESS IN
ZAMBIA**

BY

MPEZA MWAMBA

Supervisor: DR. K. MWELWA

A Dissertation Submitted to the University of Zambia School of Education in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the award of the Master's Degree in Education and Development.

LUSAKA

2025

COPY RIGHT DECLARATION

All rights reserved. No part of this dissertation may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the author or the University of Zambia.

© Mpeza Mwamba, 2025.

DECLARATION

I, **Mpeza Mwamba** hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for any other awards at the University of Zambia or any other University.

Name of Candidate:

Signature

Date

Mpeza Mwamba

.....

.....

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This dissertation of **Mpeza Mwamba** has been approved as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award the Master's Degree in Education and Development by the University of Zambia.

Name of Examiner:	Signature	Date
.....
.....
.....

Board Chairperson:	Signature	Date
.....

ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, employers in several industries have become increasingly vocal about employability skills: the set of transferable skills characterized as the higher-order thinking skills and personal attributes that employees need to succeed in a work environment. The purpose of this study was to investigate the integration of employability skills training in university programmes and their effectiveness in promoting graduate work readiness in selected universities in Zambia. The study used a mixed-method design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research. A total of 96 students and 10 key informants including lecturers and school administrators participated in this study. Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the study participants. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. The Chi-Square test was employed to assess the level of significance in the study's findings. The interview responses were analysed purely through the description and thematic analysis. The findings revealed a comprehensive set of essential skills, aligning with the broader employability requirements in various professional fields. Research skills, communication skills, computer literacy, project planning and management, emotional intelligence, and mentorship and soft skills emerged as critical components for students' preparedness for the professional realm. The findings further revealed that the majority (53.1%) of students reported a moderate level of confidence in their preparedness for employment, while a substantial proportion (44.8%) of the students, expressed a high level of confidence in their ability to take on a job. Further analysis indicated that students from public universities exhibit significantly higher confidence levels (52.3%) compared to their counterparts in private universities (29%). The study found that the integration of employability skills involved incorporating practical aspects into lessons, simulations, group assignments, field trips, presentations, peer teaching, industrial attachments, and internships. The study established that the integration of employability skills training within university programs emerged as a crucial mechanism for fostering work readiness among students. The findings highlighted key obstacles, including faculty competences, challenges in teaching practical aspects, lack of organized skill integration, issues with student attachments, and weak links between industry and university. The study recommends the need to develop a comprehensive curriculum that addresses a broad range of employability skills and find innovative ways of encouraging the use of diverse pedagogical approaches to reinforce employability skills among students.

Keywords: Approaches, Employability skills, Graduate work readiness, Integration, Students, Programmes

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved mummy Emeldah Mwendapole, whose unwavering guidance and support have been instrumental throughout my university journey. Your thoughtful inquiries and insightful advices particularly in exploring the best-suited master's degree program for my undergraduate background have been invaluable. I am deeply grateful for your love care and encouragement.

I also celebrate my own resilience, determination, and perseverance which have been the driving forces behind this journey. This achievement is a powerful testament to my personal growth, and I take immense pride in my achievements and the strong, capable and compassionate individual I have become. Through handwork and dedication I have reached a milestone that showcases my accomplishments, and I am thrilled to mark this momentous occasion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the almighty God for giving me an opportunity to pursue this program, I had a great time studying master's in Education and Development (EAPS Department). This was a joyful academic experience.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor DR. K. MWELWA for his unwavering and meticulous guidance throughout the entirety of my research.

I am grateful to my loved ones for their generous support and backing during this process. Special thanks are also due to Esnart Nkhoma, whose thoughtful provoking input helped me reframe my research approach.

And lastly Heartfelt Tribute to my parents (Maj R.M Mwendapole and Maj P.Mwamba), who may be gone but not forgotten, and whose presence I still feel deeply I cherish the moments we made together. Your love and legacy live on in me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPY RIGHT DECLARATION	i
DECLARATION	ii
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ACRONYMS	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Overview	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	3
1.3 Purpose of the study	4
1.4 Research objectives	4
1.5 Research questions	4
1.6 Significance of the Study	5
1.7 Theoretical framework	5
1.7.1 Student Identity Theory	5
1.8 Conceptual Framework	7
1.9 Definition of key terms	8
1.9 Chapter summary	9
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.0 Overview	10

2.1 Understanding Employability Skills	10
2.2 Essential Employability Skills in Education	12
2.3 Historical Roles of the University	13
2.4 Teacher training and Acquisition of employability skills	15
2.5 Students' proficiency in employability skills essential for graduate work readiness	18
2.6 Influence of employability skills training on graduate work readiness	19
2.7 Approaches for Integrating employability skills training in university programmes	21
2.8 Challenges universities face in integrating employability skills training in their programmes	23
2.9 Research gap	25
2.10 Chapter summary	26
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	27
3.0 Overview	27
3.1 Study Design	27
3.2 Research Paradigm	28
3.3 Study site	28
3.4 Study population	28
3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Method	29
3.5.1 Sample size	29
3.5.2 Sampling method	30
3.6. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.....	32
3.6.1 Inclusion criteria	32
3.6.2 Exclusion Criteria	32
3.7 Tools for Data collection.....	33
3.8 Data analysis	33

3.9 Validity and Reliability	35
3.9.1 Validity	35
3.9.2 Reliability	35
3.10 Trustworthiness	35
3.11 Ethical consideration	36
3.12 Chapter Summary	36
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS.....	37
4.0 Introduction	37
4.1 Background information of students	37
4.2 Students' proficiency in employability skills essential for graduate work readiness	39
4.2.1 Employability skills essential for graduate work readiness that students have been exposed to	43
4.3 Approaches of integrating employability skills training into university programmes	47
4.3.1 Incorporating Skills into Course Content	49
4.3.2 Practical Work and Simulations	49
4.3.3 Practical Group Assignments and Projects	50
4.3.4 Peer Teaching and Class Exercises	50
4.3.5 Industrial Attachments and Exposure to Actual Industry	51
4.3.6 Formal Assessments and Internship Evaluations	51
4.4 Promoting work readiness - the impact of employability skills training in university programmes for final-year students	52
4.4.1 Importance of Employability Skills	52
4.4.2 Practical Application and Field Trips	52
4.4.3 Industry Trust and Recognition	53
4.4.4. Promotion of Work Readiness and Job Performance	53

4.5 Challenges universities were facing in integrating employability skills training in degree programmes.....	54
4.5.1 Faculty Competence	54
4.5.2 Challenges in Teaching Practical Aspects.....	55
4.5.3 Lack of Organised Integration of Skills	55
4.5.4 Issues with Student Attachments.....	56
4.5.5 Weak Links Between Industry and University.....	56
4.6 Chapter Summary.....	57
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	58
5.0 Introduction	58
5.1 How proficiency in employability skills training within selected university programmes impact work readiness among final-year students	58
5.2 Approaches of integrating employability skills training into university programmes.....	61
5.4 Challenges universities are facing in integrating employability skills training in degree programmes.....	64
5.5 Chapter Summary.....	65
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	66
6.0. Introduction	66
6.1 Conclusions	66
6.1.1 How does proficiency in employability skills training within selected university programmes impact work readiness among final-year students?.....	66
6.1.2 What are the approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into selected university programmes?.....	67
6.1.4 What are the challenges that universities are facing in integrating employability skills training in their programmes?.....	68
6.2 Recommendations	68

6.2.1 Practical Recommendations for universities	69
6.2.2 Policy Recommendations	69
6.2.3 Academic Relevance Recommendations.....	70
6.3 Recommendations for further studies	70
6.4 Chapter summary	70
References	71
Appendices.....	76
Appendix I: Interviewer guide for school administrators.....	76
Appendix II: Interviewer guide for lecturers.....	79
Appendix III: Questionnaire for students.....	82
Appendix IV: Interviewer guide for labour/higher education officials.....	86

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Background characteristics of students (n=96).....	37
Table 2: Percent distribution and cross-tabulation of students' confidence to take on a job by background characteristics.....	41
Table 3: Students' level of competence on selected employability skills.....	42

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Programme of study	38
Figure 2: Students' views of whether employability skills are more important than specialist knowledge	39
Figure 3: Students' confidence to take on a job	40
Figure 4: Approaches of integrating employability skills.....	48

LIST OF ACRONYMS

HEA: Higher Education Authority

ICT: Information Communications Technologies

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

TEVETA: Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority

UNILUS: University of Lusaka

UNZA: University of Zambia

WHO: World Health Organisation

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter introduces the study on the integration of employability skills in university programmes for graduate work readiness in universities. It highlights the study background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives and research questions. Further, the chapter presents the significance of the study, delimitation, theoretical framework and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the study

Employability skills (or hard and soft skills) are an issue of concern for graduates, employers and curriculum developers around the globe (Hoque, et al., 2023). However, in emerging economies, it is more critical (Asonitou, 2015). The expansion of ICTs, the emergence of new technologies, and the effects of globalisation have changed production processes, which now demand new skills to improve workplace productivity and capitalise on technological innovations. Among the skills on demand by employers are employability skills. Employability skills are also referred to 'Generic skills', 'generic competencies', 'core skills', and 'underpinning skills' (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016). The broadly accepted definition is that employability skills are personal attributes and generic work-related competencies that employers appreciate (Curtis & Mcenzie, 2001).

Over the last decade, employers in several industries have become increasingly vocal about employability skills: the set of transferable skills characterized as the higher-order thinking skills and personal attributes that employees need to succeed in a work environment (Lowden et al., 2011). Previous reports have listed 10 top employability skills for undergraduates as identified by employers which included oral and written communication, leadership, teamwork, conflict management, initiative, responsibility, decision making, problem solving and critical thinking skills (Hart Research Associates, 2013; Drummond and Rosenbluth, 2015). Scientific Research suggests that employability skills are highly valued, and that several employers rank employability skills above degree designation or university reputation (Finch et al., 2012). Governments have taken note of this trend, too. In some cases, it has been insisted that postsecondary funding be tied in part to preparing graduates for the workforce (Goodwin, et al., 2019). For example, Canada, Australia and the UK have all made funding partly contingent upon

the twinned “demonstrable graduate outcomes” of disciplinary competence and employability skills (Bridgstock, 2009).

Since the advent of the 21st century the world has been experiencing rapid changes in knowledge, technology and information. These changes pose challenges to the providers of education and training in general and university programmes and training in particular. The impact of technological advancement and the nature of organisational changes in the workplace demand skills of an increasingly higher level – particularly skills in the areas of information technology, problem solving and communication. This will ensure that graduates are work ready. Employability skills have been found to promote graduate work readiness positively. According to Borg, Turner, and Scott-Young (2017), student work readiness relates to the attainment of relevant skills and knowledge that enable students to make meaningful contributions to the industry and aid them in their transition from student to practitioner. Mwelwa (2020) claims that for graduates to be employable and carry a graduate identity, they need to possess a mix of employability skills. A person's smooth transition into the workforce translates into higher interactions in the workplace, resulting in benefits for both the employee and the employer. It is, therefore, essential to acquaint university students with the importance of employability skills to promote graduate work readiness. Previous studies have shown that students who can understand and use these skills and their educational qualifications will be better placed to take advantage of educational and employment opportunities (Borg, Turner, & Scott-Young, 2017).

Farooqui and Gupta (2022) claim that it is crucial to introduce employability skills training in institutions of learning such as university through focused participatory strategies. They further argue that it is equally important to understand how employability skills in academic settings can be measured, assessed and evaluated. Worldwide, diverse employability skills intervention models are being implemented. These range from an out-of-school strategy to system-integrated in-school strategies, both with their own merits and demerits (Farooqui & Gupta, 2022).

Research has shown that employers advocate for the integration of practical skill development into university programs, with a view that a closer alignment between graduate work readiness and desired employability skills would follow as a result (Cavanagh, Burstone & Southcombe, 2015). However, there is evidence that university programmes are not producing work-ready

graduates. In their research study, De la Harpe, Radloff and Wyber (2000) suggested that there is concern worldwide that students are graduating from their university programmes without the skills necessary for their future careers. This highlights an existing difference between the definition and understanding of the concept of work readiness from academic and industry perspectives, placing the students in a position where the skills taught to them at university to prepare them for the workforce are not aligned to the demands of their employers in the respective industry.

In Zambia, there has been notable concerns over the growing number of reports regarding the mismatch between the skills graduates acquire from universities or colleges and what is expected of them in the job market (Mwelwa, 2020). Hence, these critical generic skills must be introduced in universities and colleges through participatory strategies, in a conducive classroom environment and by trained, qualified professionals. Following that, it is equally important to understand how employability skills in educational settings can be measured, assessed, and evaluated to see their effectiveness in promoting work readiness of graduates. Against this backdrop, this study sought to investigate the integration of employability skills training in university programmes and their effectiveness in promoting graduate work readiness in selected universities in Zambia.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There has been a global acceptance about the importance of school-based introduction of employability skills for adolescents and young adults. In Zambia, however, most university programmes do not acquaint students with critical employability skills needed in the industry. This is evident from a study by Moono and Rankin (2013), who found that the education curricula from most higher learning institutions in Zambia did not equip graduates with the specific skills needed in the industry. Moreover, the issue of instructors integrating employability skills into university courses is a concern in most university courses (Moono & Rankin, 2013). This has resulted in several graduates from universities not being ready for work. For example, a study done among university graduates in Zambia by Mwelwa (2020) found that most social science graduates were not work-ready when joining the labour industry. In addition, Mwelwa (2020) found that employers were less satisfied with their demonstration of employability skills.

Many graduates from Zambian universities have been found to be less work ready, hence the need to investigate the importance of integrating life skills into the curriculum.

There are negative implications if graduates do not possess employability skills. Among them, they may find it very challenging to secure employment. This suggests the importance of well-integrated employability skills training in university programmes to promote work readiness among graduates from Zambian universities. Thus, this study sought to explore the integration of employability skills training in university degree programmes for graduate work readiness in two Zambian universities.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore how employability skills training is integrated into university degree programmes in Zambia and to evaluate its effectiveness in preparing graduates for the workplace. Specifically, the study sought to identify the approaches through which employability skills training is incorporated within programmes and some of the challenges encountered. The study also sought to investigate the extent to which graduates feel prepared for employment upon completing their studies.

1.4 Research objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- 1) Assess how employability skill training proficiency within selected university programmes enhances work readiness among final-year students.
- 2) Establish the approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into the selected university programmes.
- 3) Identify challenges universities are facing in integrating employability skills training in their programmes.

1.5 Research questions

- 1) How does proficiency in employability skills training within selected university programmes impact work readiness among final-year students?
- 2) What are the approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into selected university programmes?

- 3) What challenges are universities facing in integrating employability skills training in their programmes?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is important in enhancing our understanding of how employability skills may be integrated into university programmes to promote graduate work readiness. The findings may provide valuable insights for educators, employers, and policymakers on the significance of employability skills training in higher education.

For universities, the study may offer evidence-based recommendations on how employability skills training can be effectively embedded into curricula. For policymakers, it may serve as a guide in shaping policies that align academic training with labour market demands. Furthermore, the study may contribute to existing literature, expanding knowledge on employability skills training and its role in graduate readiness. Lastly, the findings may serve as a foundation for future research in this field.

1.7 Theoretical framework

With regard to research focusing on work readiness, there is an observed discord in various theoretical frameworks being used to explain the concept within the extant literature. The study adopted the Student Identity Theory to explain work readiness of university graduates. The Student Identity Theory was adopted as it has been widely used to explain and identify elements of graduate work readiness (Daniels & Brooker 2014).

1.7.1 Student Identity Theory

Student Identity Theory is one theory that has been used to explain work readiness. This theory stems from Chickering and 'Reisser's (1993) work in the mid-twentieth century; Student Identity Theory holds that students attend university to develop purpose and identity (Daniels & Brooker 2014). Student identity is viewed as an integral component of work readiness and Student Identity Theory suggests that for graduates to be work ready, they need to adopt an active role in their identity formation throughout university (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Originally, Chickering and Reisser (1993, p. 9) described student identity as a function of seven vectors, encompassing the following:

- i. developing competence;
- ii. managing emotions;
- iii. moving through autonomy towards interdependence;
- iv. developing mature interpersonal relationships;
- v. establishing identity;
- vi. developing purpose; and
- vii. developing integrity.

According to the Student Identity Theory, these vectors are expected to differ in the manner in which they are developed amongst different individuals. Chickering and Reisser (1993) stated that the student would only manage to obtain and develop the attributes required for their professional development through establishing their student identity.

In the higher education literature, student identity remains a focus in higher education literature (Daniels & Brooker 2014). Literature suggests a relationship exists between university profiles and graduate attributes (Lairo, Puukari & Kuovo, 2013), seeing that as skills in the 'students' disciplinary field of knowledge are being developed, so too is the 'students' identity (Lounsbury et al. 2005). In the context of graduate work readiness, it is presumed that as students develop the attributes required to be ready for work, they will also develop their self-identity (Daniels & Brooker, 2014). Also, student identity is not just viewed as being a vital component of successful learning but also an integral factor of work readiness (Lairio, Puukari & Kuovo, 2013).

In the context of graduate work readiness, the Student Identity Theory proposes that for graduates to be work ready, they need to adopt an active, participatory role in their identity formation throughout university (Daniels & Brooker, 2014). As such, the theory postulates that the development of 'graduates' sense of identity adds another dimension to the graduate attributes taught at university and enriches their overall work-readiness and the ability to perform well in the workplace.

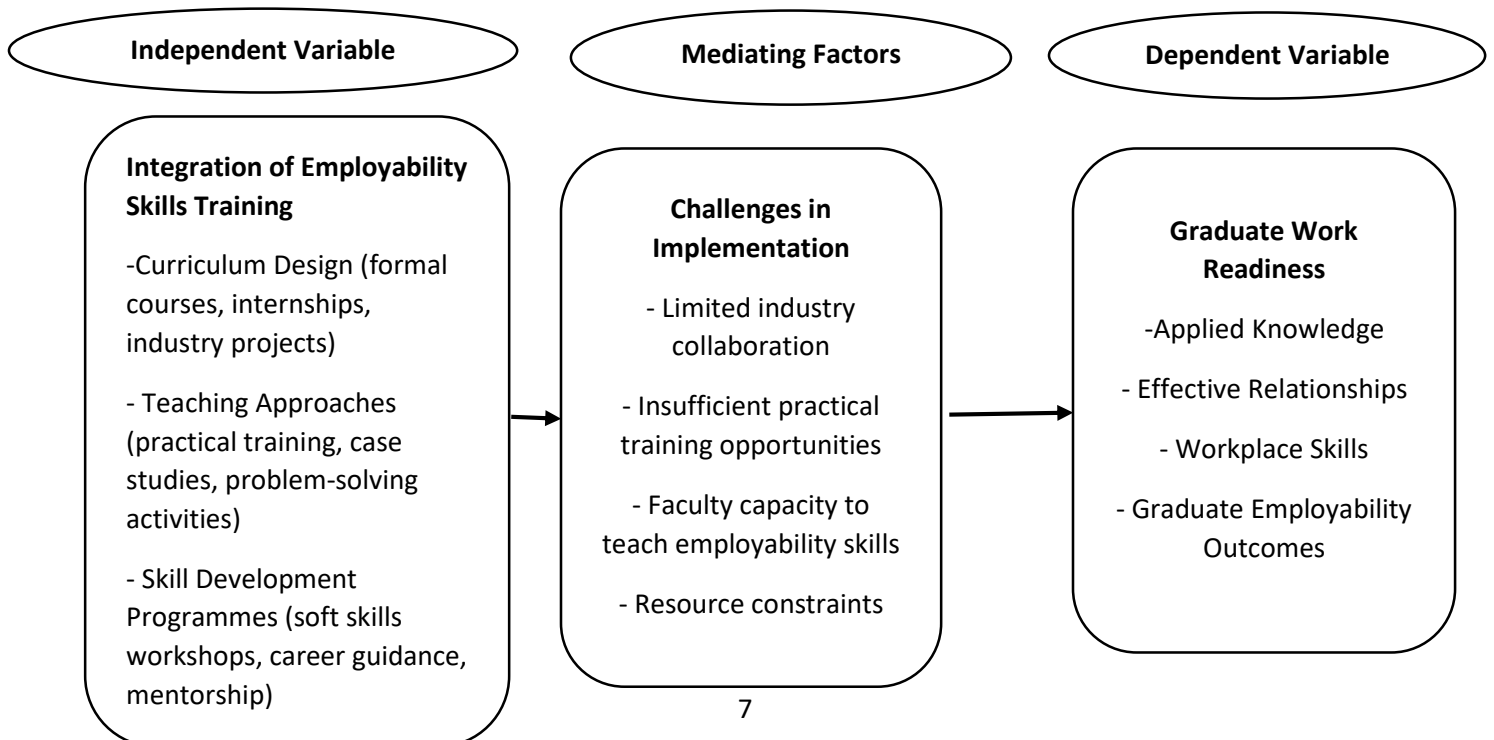
The study adopted the Student Identity Theory to explain elements needed for a graduate to be work ready because it explains what aspects or attributes are needed for a graduate to be work ready. In addition, the model also touches on the aspects of how universities play a key role in developing student identity through various programmes.

Applying the Student Identity Theory in this study, students need to actively participate in their identity formation throughout their time at university to be work-ready (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). In this sense, 'graduates' development of a sense of identity will add another dimension to the graduate attributes taught at university. Consequently, this enriches their work-readiness and ability to perform well in the workplace. Therefore, this study used the Student Identity Theory to understand how work readiness attributes are developed through university programmes.

The Student Identity Theory was adopted as the guiding theoretical framework because it provides a comprehensive explanation of how university experiences contribute to graduate work readiness. Unlike other theories that focus primarily on the acquisition of technical skills or employer expectations, Student Identity Theory (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) emphasises the holistic development of graduates. It considers how personal growth, identity formation, and interpersonal skills are cultivated through higher education, which aligns well with the study's focus on employability attributes embedded in university programmes.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the link between the integration of employability skills training in university degree programmes and graduate work readiness. It is informed by the Employability Skills Framework and focuses on how different components of employability skills training contribute to preparing graduates for the job market.



The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the integration of employability skills training in university programmes, the challenges that affect its implementation, and the resulting graduate work readiness. The independent variable, integration of employability skills training, represents how universities embed employability skills into their curricula through curriculum design, teaching approaches, and skill development programmes. These strategies aim to equip students with both technical and soft skills necessary for success in the labor market.

However, the effectiveness of these training programmes is influenced by mediating factors, which include challenges in implementation such as limited industry collaboration, insufficient practical training opportunities, faculty capacity constraints, and resource limitations. These challenges may hinder the full realisation of employability training benefits, potentially reducing its impact on graduates' preparedness for the workforce.

The dependent variable, graduate work readiness, reflects the extent to which students acquire the necessary skills for employment. This includes applied knowledge, effective workplace relationships, and essential workplace skills such as problem-solving and communication. The ultimate measure of success is the extent to which graduates secure employment and meet employer expectations. Overall, the conceptual framework suggests that the integration of employability skills training in university degree programmes directly influences graduate work readiness. However, this relationship is affected by challenges in implementation, which may either enhance or limit the effectiveness of the training.

1.9 Definition of key terms

Employability skills: Employability skills are the required skills to secure employment and to make a progress within an enterprise in an attempt to contribute effectively to strategic directions and reach one's potential (Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Lopes, 2004).

Work readiness: Refers to the need for graduates to possess a range of generic skills and attributes, over and above their formal qualifications, that make them "'prepared' or "'ready' for both general and more specific workplaces (Priksat et al., 2018)

Graduates: People who have received a degree from a school (college or university)

University programmes comprise the core, required and elective courses leading to a degree or certificate.

1.9 Chapter summary

The chapter looked at the integration of employability skills training in university programmes for graduate work readiness in selected universities in Zambia. The major parts covered in this chapter include the background to the study, problem statement and aim of the study, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, delimitation, theoretical and conceptual framework and definition of key terms. The next chapter looks at the literature review related to the topic under study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

The previous chapter looked at the introduction to the study on the integration of employability skills training in university programmes for graduate work readiness in selected universities in Zambia. This chapter presents the literature related to the topic under study. The chapter is structured in such a way that it will look at understanding employability skills; essential employability skills in education; historical roles of the university; teacher training and acquisition of employability skills. The empirical section focuses on students' proficiency in employability skills essential for graduate work readiness; influence of employability skills training on graduate work readiness; approaches for integrating employability skills training in university programmes; and challenges universities face in integrating employability skills training in their programmes. The chapter ends with a section on the knowledge gap in the reviewed literature and thereafter a chapter summary is presented.

2.1 Understanding Employability Skills

Employability skills are also referred to 'Generic skills', 'generic competencies', 'core skills', and 'underpinning skills' (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016). The word 'skill' is related to values, identity and 'personal attributes. The generic skills are widely defined as transferable skills which are necessary for employability" and currently the expression of 'generic skills for employability' is extensively used in research and policy (Mohd et al., 2013).

Based on Mayer's definition (1992) employability skills are the required skills to secure employment and to make a progress within an enterprise in an attempt to contribute effectively to strategic directions and reach one's potential (Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Lopes, 2004). A variety of skills and personal attributes play roles in individual's employability. Much research has been conducted internationally to define employability, generic skills and key competencies (Mohd* et al., 2013). Several competing definitions have been provided in the existing literature on. Employability skills (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009). The broadly accepted definition is that employability skills are personal attributes and generic work-related competencies that employers appreciate (Curtis & Mcenzie, 2001). Even though some students might be aware of

improving generic skills or employability skills through having life experiences outside of university, irrespective of the fact that those experiences would have positive effects on their future career perspectives and development. Hence, the government tends to provide opportunities to improve the generic competencies skills among students by assigning various tasks during their academic years.

Essentially, Özdemir (2015) found here two most important kinds of skills - those related to thinking, thinking skills; and skills related to dealing with others, termed as social skills. While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. Combining these two types of skills is needed to achieve assertive behaviour and negotiate effectively. "Emotional" can be perceived as a skill in making rational decisions and making others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is essential. Thus, self-management is an essential skill that includes managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress, and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as advocates need both thinking and social skills for harmony building and promotion on issues of concern. The role of a teacher here is to provide ample opportunities and situations to the students so that they can acquire, process and structure these (Kalanda, 2010).

In their study, Khera and Khosla (2012) observed that education plays an important role in the overall development of human beings. Core skills are essential for adolescents, who will make up our country's future. The study investigated the relationship between self-concept and core life skills among adolescents in secondary classes of sarvodaya schools in south Delhi. The Major findings of the study were that there is a positive co-relation between Core Affective Life Skill and Self Concept of adolescents which means those who possess these essential skills are better confident in all aspects.

A study of skill acquisition by Aydoydo (2018) on classroom and science teachers' views about life skills established that teachers play a significant role in acquiring life skills. Furthermore, teachers expressed that science courses were significant setting to teach life skills. The current research found that the participants used some in-class and extracurricular activities to teach life skills. In addition, teachers expressed that they experienced difficulty in teaching life skills due

to problems related to teachers, parents, school, educational program, educational system, school management and society.

2.2 Essential Employability Skills in Education

In trying to make education more relevant, Baysal (2015) argued that information learned can only be valuable when it becomes a skill. Otherwise, it does not have any significance for students. On the other hand, transforming information into skills requires many processes. First, information should be related to a situation at hand. It should be adapted to that situation's conditions and internalised. Secondly, different life skills will be more or less relevant at different times in someone's life.

However, perhaps the most important life skill is the ability and willingness to learn (Baysal, 2015). Learning new skills may help us increase our understanding of the world around us and equip us with the tools we need to live a more productive and fulfilling life, finding ways to cope with the challenges that life, inevitably throws at us. Life skills are not always taught directly but often learned indirectly through experience and practice. Life skill-based Education should start at an early period of Education and continue till the student completes his graduation. If we can start life skill-based Education earlier, before negative patterns of interaction and behaviour have become established (WHO, 1993), it would be much more effective. The core Life Skills includes the following: Self-awareness empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, effective communication and interpersonal relationship. These Life skills act as facilitators to strengthen the survival capacities of the individuals by providing them an orientation to basic Education, major health issues, and social and basic management skills for active community participation.

Work Readiness

Work readiness is a relatively new construct in the career development and training and development literature. In addition, it is in its infant stages of development. It is difficult for all to agree on one definition of work readiness and what skills and attributes indicate work readiness (Nasheeda, 2019). Despite this lack of consensus, it is regarded as a selection criterion that predicts graduate potential in the workforce. O'Banion (2011) defined work readiness as the level to which graduates are perceived as possessing attitudes and attributes that will enable them to be prepared for success in the workforce. Graduate students, as used here, refer to students

who have completed their undergraduate degrees or graduate degrees and are going to the workforce to work. These groups of students fall into the category Kalanda (2010) referred to as adult students (above age 20).

There is another definition for the term, work ready. Hart (2008) defined a work-ready individual as one having "the foundational skills needed to be minimally qualified for a specific occupation as determined through a job analysis or occupational profile. The report also indicated that the skills needed to be work ready are both foundational and occupational-specific, vary in importance and level for different occupations, and depend on the critical tasks identified via a job analysis or an occupational profile.

In developing a work readiness inventory, Brady (2010) also defined work readiness as those personal attributes, worker traits, and coping mechanisms needed to land and keep that job. In addition, Brady (2010) distinguished between these work readiness attributes and academic or technical competencies acquired in reading, writing and arithmetic. Following this chain of thought, one would not be wrong to say that there is a disconnect between students' conceptualisation of readiness for work and that of hiring personnel from many of these recruiting organisations. This disconnect is reflected in the student skills index (O'Banion, 2011). To investigate this, Nasheeda (2019) found out that students place more importance on school prestige than hiring managers as a variable influencing their work readiness. Secondly, students overinflate the value of professional or personal connections as compared to managers. Also, students place a high premium on high GPAs as a determinant of their readiness for employment, even though this requirement is not extremely important to recruiting managers. These disconnects are not only limited to students and employers. This is because the construct of work readiness remains fragmented within the research arena.

2.3 Historical Roles of the University

Universities and colleges have the task of enhancing students' analytical skills and preparing them to solve problems in the workplace (O'Banion, 2011). This task is one of the four key functions of universities. The other functions of universities include the following: universities serve as the ideological apparatus that takes on the different ideological divides in society. In addition, universities are the vehicle for recruiting and socialising dominant elites. Also,

universities are the locations for the generation of knowledge. For the layperson, this last function appears to be their most valuable function. This latter point of view is consistent with previous studies on the objectives of university education contained in the O'Neil assessment. This assessment was based on a round table of university lecturers, business managers, and graduate students. In this assessment, the general consensus reached was that the university was a space to acquire general skills of thinking. This view was ranked highest consistently across all the various groups present at this round table. These results emphasise the need to educate students first of all (Hart, 2008).

Consequently, universities and colleges take pride in their alumni engaging in socially responsible local, state and national endeavours with the knowledge gained (Nasheeda, 2019). Within the walls of educational institutions, students' education is often guided by different philosophies of the founding fathers, state funding policies, and the governing bodies that regulate how students interact with the whole process of knowledge acquisition and life transformation. These policies and demands from stakeholders sometimes contradict the roles universities and colleges are expected to play. From the moment a student enters an institution of higher Education, many levels of interaction occur between the student and several institutions within the university. The student interacts with administration, faculty and student groups; all planned events and developmental experiences which are geared towards the total Education of the students. Even though knowledge is exchanged and students develop analytical and problem-solving skills, they look forward to graduating and using the acquired knowledge to work and to make a difference in their communities. However, this task of universities and colleges is successful when there are higher graduation rates and students gain employment after graduation in their chosen fields of work (Kawalekar, 2017).

As a result of this symbiotic relation between universities and colleges and the society, universities are demanding more to respond and adapt to the needs of other social and economic institutions. For example, in recent years, higher education institutions in Zambia are being called upon to graduate students that can compete on the global stage with their peers in other high performing nations. In addition, these higher education institutions are entreated to go beyond their traditional roles to equip students with skills needed in the future (Hart, 2008)

2.4 Teacher training and Acquisition of employability skills

Teacher training for embedding life skills into vocational teaching is an important element of Education as it offers an opportunity for students to earn a living after training. Simona (2015) in his study on Teacher training and employability skills, the outcomes of the desk research and need analysis reveal the importance of teacher training for embedding life skills into the specialist subject teaching. It was suggested that while specialist teachers, particularly VET programs, teach some employability skills, others should be addressed in the current teaching of specialised subjects. Teachers and learners should be aware of the employability skills most needed for improving the employment prospects, and of their own learning needs and attitudes regarding life skills. Vocational teachers need practical training to raise self-confidence and provide individual support for disadvantaged learners, particularly related to communication, problem solving, literacy, attitude and resilience. The training program should focus on helping teachers develop learners' positive attitudes to the job, entrepreneurship skills and job skills. Raising the learners' autonomy and fostering personal development require teacher training for developing self-management, study skills and self-assessment. Relevant methodological suggestions for learning tasks or students' assessment could be very useful for teachers to develop learning and interpersonal skills (Simona, 2015).

Simona's (2015) study aligns with the current study to understand the development of life skills and entrepreneurship for teachers who will then impart the skills to others, especially the young people in lower grades. However, the gap is that the study looked at identifying skills while the current study will look at how many universities offer life skills and entrepreneurship and determine if the students are appreciating.

A systematic review was conducted by Nasheeda (2019) to investigate the literature on effectiveness of life skills programs. This review aimed to comprehensively understand the effectiveness of life skills education globally and identify research gaps and priorities. Findings revealed differences in life skills education within developing countries and developed countries. Developed countries generally conduct more systematic life skills education programs promoting positive behavior, with research articulating outcomes on individual youth. In contrast, most developing countries' life skills programs lack systematic implementation, evaluation and monitoring. Programs are often conducted to yield short term results only (Nasheeda, 2019).

Kalanda (2010) analysed the concept of skills and identified the skills entrepreneurs need to lead their teams. To accomplish these goals, the primary step was to determine the leadership skills developed by the universities in the entrepreneurship and innovation courses and to compare it with the needed skills perceived by entrepreneurs. This research approach was framed in the Management Sciences, and the research problem was anchored to the following research questions: What leadership skills are required by students for them to be effective in entrepreneurial endeavors upon graduation? Are the skills identified by the entrepreneurs sufficiently learned in Universities in Portugal? Does the student work experience, gender or age contribute to a level of leadership skills attainment? The leadership skills identified by the entrepreneurs were pointed out by two focus groups with 15 entrepreneurs and by conceptual content analysis, establishing the existence and frequency of concepts represented by the words or phrases in the entrepreneur's discourse. Finally, to verify if those skills are being developed in the entrepreneurship and innovation of higher education courses, an online survey was conducted with the students from the 3rd year of 2016/2017 academic year of several universities (Roselyne, 2014).

This study did not examine employability skills education but concentrated only on entrepreneurship. One of the similarities with the current study is that both considered focus groups as the way of collecting data. Both studies are done in universities as a target population as they are key in imparting knowledge to others. In reference to the acquisition of life skills, more emphasis has been made on what ought to be done. It was stated that the ministry has pledged to ensure that the acquisition of employability skills is prioritised to promote inclusive economic growth. She (Ps) adds that life skills training has the potential to offer decent employment opportunities for all Zambians regardless of the educational background (Roselyne, 2014).

Similar to the above narrative, speaking during the launch of the five-year strategic plan in Lusaka, of the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), the Ministry of Education states that skills can raise the productivity of enterprises and promote economic growth. The ministry notes that to enhance the country's technical, vocational and entrepreneurship training, the Ministry of Higher Education will continue to support TEVETA through the Skills Development Fund. She also called on training providers in

the country to develop their capacity, to enable them contribute to the country's development by providing quality skills training. TEVETA strategic plan which will run from 2021 to 2026 together with the Technical Education and Vocational Training policy was launched in 2020, which will provide a holistic and coordinated approach in ensuring that quality and relevant skills that respond to the country's needs are development. TEVETA Director-General Cleophas Takaiza said the strategic plan has placed Technical, Vocational and Entrepreneurship training at the centre of Zambia's socio-economic development. Mr Takaiza further observed that apart from enhancing the impartment of quality skills for youth employment, the Strategic Plan will also increase access to skills and Education, especially by the vulnerable (Khera and Khosla, 2012). The Government of Zambia through the Ministry of Higher Education is on top of promoting life skills and entrepreneurship as it has the potential to grow the social economy. This is in line with the current study which explores the development of life skills and entrepreneurship in higher Education (Kalanda, 2010).

In an attempt to focus on life skills, the Ministry of Education in Zambia has been making many changes to the Education System. For instance, 1996, the Government of the Republic of Zambia reviewed the 1969 post-independence policy on Technical Education and Vocational Training. A new policy, which incorporated and mainstreamed Entrepreneurship, was adopted in 2013, giving the country the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) policy. The new policy aimed to create a national system of providing TEVET that would satisfy the labor market, socio-economic concerns and resource-based opportunities in the economy in general, but more specifically, in the first place seeks to balance the supply of skilled labor at all levels with the demands of the economy (Roselyne, 2014).

Secondly, it acts as a vehicle for improved productivity and income generation and is an instrument for the minimisation of inequalities among people. This is in line with the current study because it shows the efforts by the government in developing life skills and entrepreneurship at all levels in Education. The only gap is that this study is not looking at policies but to contextualise life skills and entrepreneurship Education teaching in selected Universities in Lusaka district, Zambia (Khera and Khosla, 2012) holistically.

2.5 Students' proficiency in employability skills essential for graduate work readiness

The transition from higher education to the workforce requires students to possess employability skills crucial for success in the professional environment. Various studies have explored the proficiency of students in these skills and their readiness for graduate work.

Employability skills are a combination of technical and soft skills that enhance an individual's capability to secure and maintain employment. According to Lowden et al. (2011), employers emphasize the importance of these skills, particularly in new graduates. Their research indicates a significant gap between the skills employers seek and those that graduates possess, highlighting the need for educational institutions to address these discrepancies.

Communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, and adaptability are frequently cited as essential employability skills (Andrews & Higson, 2008). These skills benefit job acquisition, career advancement, and adaptability in a rapidly changing job market. Curtis and McKenzie (2001) argue that while technical knowledge is fundamental, the integration of soft skills into educational curricula is imperative for producing well-rounded graduates.

The role of higher education in developing these skills has been a subject of debate. Bridgstock (2009) points out that traditional academic programs often focus more on theoretical knowledge than practical skills, leaving graduates underprepared for the workplace. Similarly, Hart Research Associates (2013) found that employers believe that colleges should place a stronger emphasis on teaching skills such as critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving.

Employability skills development is not uniform across disciplines. For instance, Nivedita and Singh (2016) note that students in engineering and business are more likely to receive explicit training in these skills than those in the humanities and social sciences. This disparity suggests a need for a more integrated approach to employability skills training across all academic disciplines.

Experiential learning opportunities, such as internships and cooperative education programs, have significantly enhanced students' employability skills. Moono and Rankin (2013) emphasize that practical experience allows students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, thereby improving their work readiness. Similarly, Finch et al. (2012) advocate for the inclusion

of more hands-on learning experiences within academic programs to better prepare students for the demands of the workplace. Despite the recognized importance of employability skills, there is variability in how effectively students acquire these skills. Prikshat et al. (2018) suggest that factors such as motivation, access to resources, and the quality of instruction play crucial roles in students' skill development. They call for educational institutions to adopt more personalized and supportive approaches to skill acquisition.

In addition to institutional efforts, self-directed learning and continuous professional development are crucial for maintaining employability. As Mayer, Caruso, and Salovey (2016) highlight, emotional intelligence and lifelong learning are key to career success. They argue that the ability to adapt and learn new skills throughout one's career is as important as the initial skill set acquired during formal education.

In conclusion, students' employability skills proficiency is a critical determinant of their readiness for the workforce. While there are gaps between the skills students possess and those required by employers, educational institutions play a vital role in bridging this gap through curriculum design, experiential learning opportunities, and personalized support. Continuous professional development and self-directed learning further enhance employability, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for the dynamic demands of the job market.

2.6 Influence of employability skills training on graduate work readiness

The transition from higher education to the workforce is a critical period for graduates, requiring a set of skills that extend beyond academic knowledge. Employability skills, which include both technical and soft skills, are essential for enhancing graduate work readiness. This literature review examines the impact of employability skills training on graduates' preparedness for the workforce.

2.6.1 Importance of Employability Skills

Employability skills are broadly defined as the transferable skills needed by an individual to make them employable. Along with good technical understanding and subject knowledge, employers often outline a set of skills that they want from an employee (Bridgstock, 2009). These skills include teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and time management. The

importance of these skills has been emphasized in numerous studies and reports (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001).

2.6.2 Impact of Training Programmes

Research indicates that training programmes designed to enhance employability skills positively impact graduate work readiness. Lowden, Hall, Elliott, and Lewin (2011) found that employers value graduates who have undergone training that includes practical work experience, internships, and employability skills workshops. Similarly, Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, and Zehner (2012) emphasized that such training programs increase graduates' confidence and their ability to perform effectively in the workplace.

2.6.3 Role of Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in providing employability skills training. According to Hart Research Associates (2013), many institutions have integrated employability skills into their curricula through modules that focus on career management, personal development, and work-based learning opportunities. This integration helps students understand the relevance of their academic learning to real-world applications (O'Banion, 2011).

2.6.4 Outcomes of Employability Skills Training

The outcomes of employability skills training are evident in improved graduate employability and job performance. Studies by Drummond and Rosenbluth (2015) and Kalanda (2010) showed that graduates who received employability skills training were more likely to secure employment quickly and advance in their careers. These graduates also reported higher job satisfaction and better workplace adaptability.

It has been noted that employability skills bridge the gap between basic functioning and capabilities (Prajapati, Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Employability skills education strengthens an individual's ability to meet the present society's needs and demands. Imparting employability skill training through inculcating employability skill education will help graduates be work-ready and overcome difficulties in life. Nivedita and Singh (2016) observed that embedding the employability-skills program in the university curriculum plays a key role in shaping students' personal and social competencies.

In a nutshell, employability skills training significantly enhances graduate work readiness by equipping students with the necessary skills to succeed in the workplace. Higher education institutions must continue to develop and implement effective training programs that align with industry needs. Bridging the gap between academic learning and practical application is essential for preparing graduates to meet the demands of the modern workforce.

2.7 Approaches for Integrating employability skills training in university programmes

Incorporating employability skills into university curricula is a viable solution to bridging a wide gap between the graduate 'students' skills and the demands of the work environment (Andrews & Higson, 2008). This literature review section highlights the possible methods of integrating employability skills in university programmes.

Previous studies have demonstrated that universities can integrate employability skills directly into their curriculum. In other words, employability should be embedded in curriculum design. This includes designing courses and modules with real-world applications and encouraging problem-solving, teamwork, and critical thinking. Research has shown that courses can use industry-related case studies and incorporate assignments that reflect job-related tasks, making learning more relevant to the workplace (Sreeramana, Suresh, & Pavithra, 2015). Additionally, embedding transferable skills is one of the methods to integrate employability skill. Universities can integrate employability skills, like teamwork, communication, and problem-solving, across the curriculum to align academic learning with real-world applications (Scott et al., 2019). Students, for instance, may engage in practical exercises across their degree programme to develop these skills progressively (Scott et al., 2019).

Another effective approach is offering specialised employability skills modules, often in the final year, which directly address job readiness and industry-relevant skills. These modules include activities like CV writing, mock interviews, and job application workshops facilitated by external experts to ensure industry alignment (Dearing, 1997; Cole & Tibby, 2013). Literature has also shown that work-based learning and internships are possible methods of integrating employability skills in university programmes. Programmes that offer internships, placements, or work-based learning experiences provide students with hands-on exposure to the working environment, building specific job skills and confidence (Scott, Connell, Thomson & Willison 2019). Furthermore, there is evidence that industry engagement and guest lectures are possible

methods of integrating employability skills in university programmes (Srinivas, Suresh & Aithal, 2015). Programmes that include partnerships with industry allow students to participate in activities such as guest lectures, assessments, and mock assessment centers, helping them apply theoretical knowledge practically. This ensures students' positive responses to industry involvement, as it provides hands-on learning and clearer expectations of industry standards (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Scott et al., 2019). Engaging with industry experts and incorporating guest lectures from professionals may provide students with current insights into industry demands and trends. Collaboration with industry professionals in delivering certain modules or courses helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills required in the workplace (Sreeramana, Suresh, & Pavithra, 2015). Through industry visits students gain firsthand exposure to workplace environments and industry practices.

Approaches such as soft skills development seminars have been found to equip students with employability skills for graduate work readiness (Srinivas, Suresh & Aithal, 2015; Scott, Connell, Thomson & Willison 2019). Seminars focused on developing soft skills like communication, teamwork, adaptability, and time management are crucial in ensuring that graduates adapt to the work place. These seminars are usually structured as stand-alone sessions or integrated into regular coursework to ensure students gain essential interpersonal skills that enhance employability (Srinivas, Suresh & Aithal, 2015). In addition, other methods may include career services and mentoring programmes. University career centers can provide career counseling, resume-building workshops, and interview preparation (Selwood & Muir, 2011). Mentoring programmes where students are paired with alumni or professionals in their field of interest offer valuable networking opportunities and guidance. Other methods may include reflective practice and career planning (Scott, et al., 2019). Institutions also encourage students to actively reflect on their skills and career aspirations through frameworks like CareerEDGE, which integrates career development learning, experience, and emotional intelligence (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007).

Discussion may also be used to integrate employability skills training among university students. Discussion helps the students deepen their understanding of the content and provides opportunities to learn from one another (Nair & Fahimirad, 2019). Furthermore, discussion aids in developing listening skills, assertiveness, and empathy. It also helps to develop the

communication skill of students. With these skills, students may be ready for work once they graduate.

Role playing as an approach provides an excellent opportunity for developing various employability skills among university students especially empathy. This is because in role playing students have an opportunity to play the role of another person. In this way, a student learns how one might handle a potential situation in real life. This helps increase insight into one's feeling and increases the probability of being work-ready.

However, employability skill education cannot be facilitated based on information or discussion alone. It is not only an active learning process, but it must also include experimental learning i.e., practical experience, and reinforcement of the skills for each learner in a supportive learning environment (Prajapati, Sharma & Sharma, 2017).

2.8 Challenges universities face in integrating employability skills training in their programmes

As the job market continues to evolve, the demand for graduates with robust employability skills has increased significantly. Employability skills, including critical thinking, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, are essential for graduates to successfully transition into the workforce. However, universities face several challenges in integrating employability skills training into their programs. This literature review explores these challenges and the implications for higher education institutions.

2.8.1 Misalignment with Industry Needs

One of the primary challenges is the misalignment between the skills taught in universities and the needs of the industry. Hart (2008) highlighted that there is often a disconnect between academic curricula and the practical skills required by employers. This misalignment can result in graduates who are well-versed in theoretical knowledge but lack the practical skills necessary for workplace success (Andrews & Higson, 2008).

2.8.2 Curriculum Rigidity

The traditional structure of university curricula can be a significant barrier to integrating employability skills training. Many higher education institutions have rigid curricular

frameworks that make it difficult to incorporate new courses or modify existing ones to include employability skills (Curtis & McKenzie, 2001). The need to meet accreditation standards and the slow process of curriculum reform further complicate efforts to integrate employability training (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

2.8.3 Faculty Engagement and Training

Another critical challenge is engaging faculty members in the process of integrating employability skills into their teaching. Many faculty members may lack the necessary training and experience to teach these skills effectively (Babbie, 2013). Drummond and Rosenbluth (2015) pointed out that professional development opportunities for faculty are essential to ensure they are equipped to incorporate employability skills into their instruction.

2.5.4.4 Resource Constraints

Resource constraints also pose a significant challenge for universities. Implementing employability skills training requires additional funding for curriculum development, training materials, and faculty development programs (Lowden et al., 2011). In many cases, universities may struggle to allocate sufficient resources to these initiatives, particularly in the face of budget cuts and financial pressures (Pitman & Broomhall, 2009).

2.8.5 Student Engagement

Engaging students in employability skills training can also be challenging. Students may not always see the immediate value of these skills and may prioritize their academic studies over employability training (Finch et al., 2012). Cavanagh, Burstone, and Southcombe (2015) noted that motivating students to participate in employability programs requires clear communication of the benefits and relevance of these skills to their future careers.

2.8.6 Institutional Support

Institutional support is crucial for the successful integration of employability skills training. This support includes financial resources, strategic planning, and a commitment from university leadership (Bridgstock, 2009). Without strong institutional backing, efforts to integrate employability skills into academic programs may lack coherence and sustainability.

In a nutshell, integrating employability skills training into university programmes is essential for preparing graduates for the workforce. However, universities face numerous challenges in this endeavor, including misalignment with industry needs, curriculum rigidity, faculty engagement, resource constraints, student engagement, and the need for institutional support. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort from all stakeholders, including university leadership, faculty, students, and employers. By overcoming these barriers, higher education institutions can better equip their graduates with the skills necessary for success in the modern job market.

2.9 Research gap

Despite extensive research on employability skills and their role in graduate work readiness, a significant gap exists in understanding how these skills are integrated into university degree programs in Zambia. This study bridges the identified research gap by providing a context-specific examination of how employability skills training is integrated into university degree programmes in Zambia. While previous research has largely focused on the importance of employability skills and their impact on graduate work readiness, there has been limited investigation into the specific methods used within Zambian universities and the challenges they encounter. This study contributes new insights by exploring the actual approaches universities use to incorporate employability skills, such as embedding them into curricula, offering specialized modules, facilitating internships, and engaging with industry partners. Additionally, it identifies key institutional barriers such as curriculum rigidity, faculty engagement challenges, and resource constraints, which have not been extensively examined in previous studies.

By assessing graduates' perceptions of their preparedness for employment, the study also highlights whether current training efforts align with workforce expectations. Furthermore, the study provides actionable recommendations to enhance the integration of employability skills training, ensuring that universities better equip graduates for the evolving job market. Through this localised and evidence-based approach, the study fills a critical gap in understanding how employability skills training is implemented in Zambia and offers a foundation for improving graduate employability outcomes.

2.10 Chapter summary

This chapter reviewed existing literature on the integration of employability skills training in university degree programmes and its role in enhancing graduate work readiness. The review began by discussing the importance of employability skills, highlighting how they combine technical and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability, which are essential for graduates to transition successfully into the workforce. Studies have shown that a significant gap exists between the skills employers seek and those possessed by graduates, emphasising the need for universities to enhance employability skills training in their curricula.

The chapter further explored various approaches for integrating employability skills into university programs. These include embedding employability training within course curricula, offering dedicated modules on job readiness, providing internship and work-based learning opportunities, and fostering industry engagement through guest lectures, mentorship programs, and career services. Experiential learning and role-playing exercises were also identified as effective methods for developing these skills.

Despite the recognized importance of employability skills, universities face several challenges in their integration. Key barriers include misalignment with industry needs, rigid curriculum structures, limited faculty training, resource constraints, low student engagement, and inadequate institutional support. These challenges hinder the effectiveness of employability skills training and contribute to the skills gap observed in graduates entering the job market.

The chapter concluded by identifying a research gap, noting that while global and regional studies have explored employability skills, limited research has been conducted on how these skills are specifically integrated into university programmes in Zambia. Additionally, little is known about the challenges universities in Zambia face in this process and the extent to which graduates feel prepared for employment. This study sought to address these gaps by providing an in-depth examination of employability skills training within selected Zambian universities, evaluating its effectiveness, and offering recommendations for improving graduate work readiness.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

The previous chapter presented the literature related to the topic under study. This chapter present the methodology, including the study design, study site, study population, sample size and sampling methods, tools for data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

3.1 Study Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The core premise of this approach is that combining quantitative and qualitative methods enhances the understanding of research problems more effectively than using either approach alone. Accordingly, this study utilised both methods to comprehensively address the research questions.

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design also referred to as a concurrent design was adopted. This is a single-phase design in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously (Creswell, 2008). The choice of this design was guided by the researcher's intention to gather different but complementary data. The goal was to develop a more holistic understanding of the research problem by integrating qualitative insights with quantitative breadth and statistical validation (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

In line with the convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, the study collected qualitative and quantitative data in parallel, analysed them separately, compared the findings, and then merged the results during the interpretation phase to generate comprehensive conclusions (Creswell, 2012). This design was particularly appropriate given the nature of the research questions, which required both qualitative and quantitative responses (Creswell, 2012).

By employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study achieved both breadth and depth of understanding, while also mitigating the limitations inherent in each approach when used independently. Babbie (2013) supports this methodological choice, arguing that the most robust research designs leverage multiple methods to capitalize on their respective strengths. Additionally, the mixed-methods approach enabled triangulation, enhancing the accuracy of

findings by examining the research phenomenon from multiple perspectives using diverse methodologies (Creswell, 2008).

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach underpinned by the pragmatism philosophy, which advocates for the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of a research problem. Pragmatism, as described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), focuses on practical solutions rather than rigid methodological distinctions, emphasising the use of multiple data sources to address complex issues. This approach enabled the study to integrate numerical data alongside qualitative insights. The combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews allowed for triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). By leveraging both statistical trends and contextual explanations, the study provided a well-rounded analysis and actionable recommendations for improving integrating employability skills in university programmes.

3.3 Study site

The study was conducted in Lusaka District involving the University of Zambia and Lusaka University. Lusaka is the capital of Zambia and one of the fastest-developing cities in Southern Africa. According to the preliminary results of the 2022 census, the population of Lusaka is 3,079,964 (Zambia Statistical Agency, 2022).

The City of Lusaka is situated in the central part of Zambia on the Central African Plateau and lies 1280m above sea level. The coordinates for Lusaka are 28°10' east of the Greenwich meridian and 15°30' south of the Equator. The district has a surface area of 360 square kilometres. Lusaka district shares district boundaries with Chongwe in the east, Mumbwa in the west, Chisamba in the north, and Chilanga in the south. The City's central position has made it one of the most important economic hubs of Zambia as it provides the market for the absorption of the agricultural produce from all provinces. In addition, Lusaka was best selected because it is the district with the highest number of universities.

3.4 Study population

Study population could simply be understood as a special group of participants carefully selected to take part in the research. According to Mulenga (2015) the population is the group of interest

to the researcher, the group to which the researcher would like the study results to be generalisable. For this study, the population included all university departmental heads, lecturers and all final year students from the two selected universities in Lusaka. Therefore, the researcher targeted this population.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Method

3.5.1 Sample size

The sample or size of a sample refers to the number of items to be selected from the universe to constitute a sample (Kothari, 2004). For the quantitative phase, the sample size was estimated using the proportions formula. The sample size for the students was estimated using the Cochran (1963) formula:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where;

- n_0 is the sample size
- e is the desired margin error
- p is the (assumed/estimated) proportion of the students' population.
- z is the standard normal deviate
- q is $1-p$

Taking into account costs (budgetary constraint) and the researcher's capabilities, the study estimated a 10% proportion. Considering: 95% ($Z = 1.96$) confidence interval, and 5% margin error. Therefore,

$$\frac{(1.96)^2 (1.96) \times 0.10(1-0.10)}{(0.05)^2 (0.05)} = 132$$

The desired sample size for this study was 132, consisting of final-year students from two selected universities. However, due to non-responses and refusals to participate, the final sample size was 96, resulting in a 72.7% response rate. Of these, 65 students (67.7%) were from a public university, while 31 students (32.3%) were from a private university. The imbalance in student

representation is justified by the significantly higher student enrollment at the public university, which naturally led to a larger proportion of participants from that institution. Despite this imbalance, the sample was adequate in terms of resource availability and feasibility. Furthermore, the sample size was sufficient to support inferential statistical analysis.

For the qualitative phase of the study the sample was 10 comprising of 2 school administrators, 7 lecturers and 1 from the Higher Education Authority. The researcher strongly believe that this number (10) is adequate as samples for qualitative studies usually tend to be small. This is supported by Sandelowski (1996) who argues that samples tend to be small in qualitative studies to support the depth of case-oriented analysis that is fundamental to this mode of inquiry. In addition, Vasileiou, Barnett and Thorpe (2018) claim that qualitative samples are purposive, selected by virtue of their capacity to provide richly-textured information relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Consequently, unlike probability sampling used in quantitative research, purposive sampling chooses 'information-rich' cases. To this effect the researcher relied on personal judgement to decide on the size of the sample and believes that the desired sample size of 10 was adequate for this qualitative phase of the study.

Therefore, the sample size for this study was 106 participants comprising of 2 school administrators, 7 lecturers, 1 official from the Higher Education Authority, and 96 students.

3.5.2 Sampling method

Purposive sampling was used to select study participants for this study. Specifically, the study used expert sampling. Expert sampling is a type of purposive sampling technique that is used when the researcher needs to glean knowledge from individuals that have particular expertise. Administrators, lecturers, and final year students were selected purposively. Given their expertise, administrators and lecturers provided rich, insightful, and contextually relevant information, which would have been difficult to obtain through probability or other non-probability sampling methods. This approach aligns with Cohen's (2011) assertion that purposive sampling facilitates access to valuable and well-informed perspectives, thereby enhancing the depth and quality of qualitative research findings.

Two universities (2) were selected purposively to be part of the study. The researcher selected one public and one private university to participate in the study. The selection ratio of one public

and one public university is justified to attain a more balanced perspective of how university degree programmes promote graduate work readiness in both public and private universities. Furthermore, this number was ideal for easy manageability.

The selection of the two universities, one public and one private was guided by a purposive sampling approach to ensure a balanced and comprehensive understanding of how employability skills training is integrated into university degree programmes across different institutional contexts. The justification for choosing one public and one private university was to capture potential differences in curriculum design, resource allocation, industry engagement, and institutional support that may influence graduate work readiness. Public universities, often characterized by government funding and standardized curricula, may have different approaches to employability training compared to private universities, which tend to have more flexibility in curriculum adaptation and industry collaboration. This selection, therefore, enhances the study's ability to compare and contrast strategies used in different educational settings, providing a more holistic perspective on employability skills integration in Zambia.

Additionally, the chosen universities were selected because they offer undergraduate programmes in educational, social sciences, and humanities disciplines on a full-time basis, ensuring accessibility to both students and academic staff actively engaged in these fields. These disciplines were specifically targeted to assess how employability skills training is embedded in non-technical programs, where work readiness skills may not be as explicitly structured as in professional or vocational fields. The inclusion of students from various disciplines allows for a broader perspective on the effectiveness of employability skills training across different academic backgrounds. Moreover, the selection of two universities was ideal for ensuring in-depth qualitative engagement while maintaining manageability in data collection and analysis.

From each of the two universities, two schools of study offering programmes in Education and Humanities and Social Sciences were purposively selected to be part of the study since the research focuses on programmes in education and humanities and social sciences. In addition, the researcher purposively selected administrators, lecturers, and final year students from these university programmes.

To get students who meet the criterion, the researcher is required to sample them according to convenience in the respective programmes. To select the students, the researcher intercepted any

student from the targeted programmes to respond to the questionnaire. This was done until the required sample size was attained. Then, students who were easily accessible and willing to participate were selected to take part in the study. This procedure is supported by Cohen et al (2007) who argues that convenient sampling involves picking the nearest individuals or those who are available to serve as participants and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained. This method was used to enhance data collection efficiency because these people are always busy with their academic schedules. Babbie (2013) argues that convenient sampling is justified if the researcher wants to study the characteristics of people passing the sampling point at specified times or if less-risky sampling methods are not feasible.

3.6. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

3.6.1 Inclusion criteria

The study purposively included both private and public universities to ensure a comprehensive analysis of how different institutional contexts influence graduate work readiness. This inclusion was based on these specific criteria: the selected universities offer undergraduate degree programmes in education, humanities, and social sciences, aligning with the study's focus on work-readiness attributes within these disciplines; their programmes are delivered on a full-time basis, providing students with substantial exposure to formal university training and interactions that shape their identity and employability skills; administrators, lecturers, and students from these institutions were accessible and willing to participate, facilitating rich data collection without logistical constraints; and only final-year students were included, as they had completed most of their academic coursework and were preparing to transition into the workforce, making them the most suitable respondents for assessing work readiness..

3.6.2 Exclusion Criteria

The study excluded certain universities and student groups to maintain research focus and ensure data relevance. Universities that do not offer degree programmes in education, humanities, or social sciences were excluded, as the study specifically aimed to explore how employability skills are integrated into these disciplines, and including programmes from natural sciences or technical fields could have introduced dynamics beyond the study's scope. Additionally, universities located outside the geographic area of interest were excluded due to logistical constraints and the need to keep data collection manageable. Students who were not in their final

year were also excluded, as they had not yet completed their academic training and may not have been able to provide informed perspectives on their readiness for the workforce.

3.7 Tools for Data collection

For this study, data was collected using qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative data was collected through interviews. This instrument facilitated the collection of the needed data to attain the research objective. In addition, the structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the students

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from administrators (head of departments per school) and lecturers who have this much experience of the perceived graduate work readiness in Public and Private universities in Lusaka District. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain more insight and understanding of the research study. Semi-structured interviews were used to ensure consistence in the collection of data and to probe for deeper information and opinions from the participants. This was so in order to yield an enriched, elaborated understanding of the problem and to seek enhancement, illustration and clarification of the results from the study.

Three semi-structured interviews were devised: one for each sample sub-type. Interviews were conducted in English. Interview responses were then transcribed exactly as they had been spoken.

Questionnaires: Structured questionnaires with closed ended questions were used to collect data from the students. The questionnaire comprised questions written in English. Closed-ended questions allowed respondents to have several alternative replies such as 'YES' or 'NO'. The advantages of using the questionnaire to collect quantitative data are that it saves time, human and financial resources. The questionnaire offers greater anonymity since there is no face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the respondents. Moreover, it is the best instrument for the quantitative phase of the study, and it helps increase the likelihood of obtaining accurate data.

3.8 Data analysis

According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), data analysis refers to creating value from the raw data. Since this study used a mixed-method approach, data was analysed using qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques involving text data.

Given that quantitative data is usually large, the use of computer software was necessary to help with the data analysis process. In this regard, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used as the statistical software for analysing quantitative data. SPSS was preferred because it is within the researcher's capacity to use the statistical software since it is user-friendly.

To better understand the characteristics of each variable, descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages were calculated for each item in the questionnaire. In addition, inferential statistics Chi-Square test was employed to estimate whether there is a likelihood of statistical significance or it occurred by chance (due to sampling error). P-value <0.05 was considered to decide statistically significant. The data was summarised and organised in tables and bar charts to aid the interpretation of data. MS-excel was used to create tables and charts for data presentation.

The interview responses were analysed purely through description and thematic analysis. During the collection of data, the researcher recorded the following: The audio recorded interview data was imported into NVivo 10 for transcription and analysis. Thereafter, the analysis of the qualitative data with which the researcher utilised in this study was thematic analysis with the help of NVivo 10. According to Gibbs (2007), thematic analysis is a form of qualitative data analysis involving recording or identifying passages of text or images linked by a common theme or idea, allowing you to index the text into categories and establish a framework of thematic ideas. The approach to thematic analysis was performed through the process of coding in phases to create meaningful patterns. The theme of a work is the main message; insight or observation the researcher offers (Gibbs, 2007). The analytic process was as follows:

- i. The notes from the notebook were typed in MS Word and served as a word document.
- ii. After that, the interview recordings from the voice recorder and the word document from the notes made from the notebook were imported into NVivo 120 and transcribed.
- iii. After that, the researcher read through the transcripts and then created nodes (themes) in NVivo 10.

Thus, the analysis that followed was organized around themes emerging from the data. The data from in-depth interviews was critically examined, explained, and rearranged into specific themes.

Ensuring Transcription Accuracy

Given that transcription software was used for data processing, several measures were taken to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the transcriptions. The researcher cross-checked the software-generated transcripts against the original audio recordings to identify and correct any errors or misinterpretations. Manual verification was also conducted to ensure that context-specific terms, industry jargon, and participant nuances were accurately captured. Additionally, a second reviewer (peer) was involved in randomly reviewing sections of the transcripts to enhance reliability and minimize bias. These strategies ensured that the transcribed data accurately reflected participants' responses, thereby maintaining the integrity of the study's findings.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

3.9.1 Validity

For validity, questionnaire was used as a data collection tool designed using findings from previous studies. Additionally, the extensive literature review was conducted during the development of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the study went through the questionnaire to ensure that the instrument measured what it intended to measure.

3.9.2 Reliability

Data collected was tested for reliability. A Cronbach alpha test of reliability was conducted. The questionnaire was considered reliable as it was above 0.7. Questionnaire was designed to give valid data with regard the topic of study.

3.10 Trustworthiness

The state of acceptability in terms of its true and unique academic product was done using Guba's four trustworthy strategies, which is ideal for all qualitative studies. In this study, credibility was be ensured through the correct methodology; hence, the data quality was assured. Transferability was ensured through contextualising with other studies in which similar information is likely to be found and new information added on to the body of knowledge hence,

data quality was assured. Third, dependability was ensured through audit inquiry. This involved examining the processes of data collection, data analysis, and the research study results. Finally, conformability was achieved by taking notes regarding personal feelings, biases, and insights immediately after an interview with the participants.

3.11 Ethical consideration

Before data collection, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the University of Zambia ethics committee. The researcher also sought permission from the selected universities' registrars to allow the researcher to interact with the participants freely. Participants were also expected to agree to be part of this study. There was no form of coercion to participate in this study. Responses from the participants were treated with maximum confidentiality. The researcher also sought permission from participants to record the interview. Regarding health, the researcher informed the participants that there were no health risks expected from participating in this study. All health guidelines were followed so that the participants' health was not put to risk.

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the methodology that was used in the study. The focus was on research design, study site, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The next chapter presents the findings of the study after field data collection

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings after the analysis of data collected from the field. The analysis of data was guided by the research objectives as presented in chapter one of this study. All statistical analyses were done in SPSS version 25, while qualitative data was analysed thematically with the help of NVivo 10. The chapter presents the respondents' background information first, followed by the findings related to specific objectives.

4.1 Background information of students

A total of 96 final-year students participated in this study. The results as presented in Table 1 indicate that most respondents (almost 68%) were drawn from a public university, while about 32% were from a private university. The data also reveals that the majority of respondents were female, constituting about 65% of the total. The male respondents make up around 34%, and there is one case where the sex is not stated. The majority of respondents fall within the age range of 20-24 years, comprising approximately 80% of the total. There are also a few respondents in other age categories.

Table 1: Background characteristics of students (n=96)

Background characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Category of university		
Public	65	67.7
Private	31	32.3
Sex		
Male	33	34.4
Female	62	64.6
Not stated	1	1
Age		
>20 years	1	1
20-24 years	77	80.3
25-29 years	17	17.7
35-39 years	1	1
Total	96	100

Figure 1 below shows a snapshot of the students' programmes of study. The results as presented in Figure 1 indicates that the two most common programs of study among the respondents are Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies and Bachelor of Adult Education, both accounting for approximately 32.3% each. This is followed by a Bachelor of Arts in Economics at 13.5%. The distribution shows a variety of programs with differing percentages, providing an overview of the diversity in the educational backgrounds of the respondents.

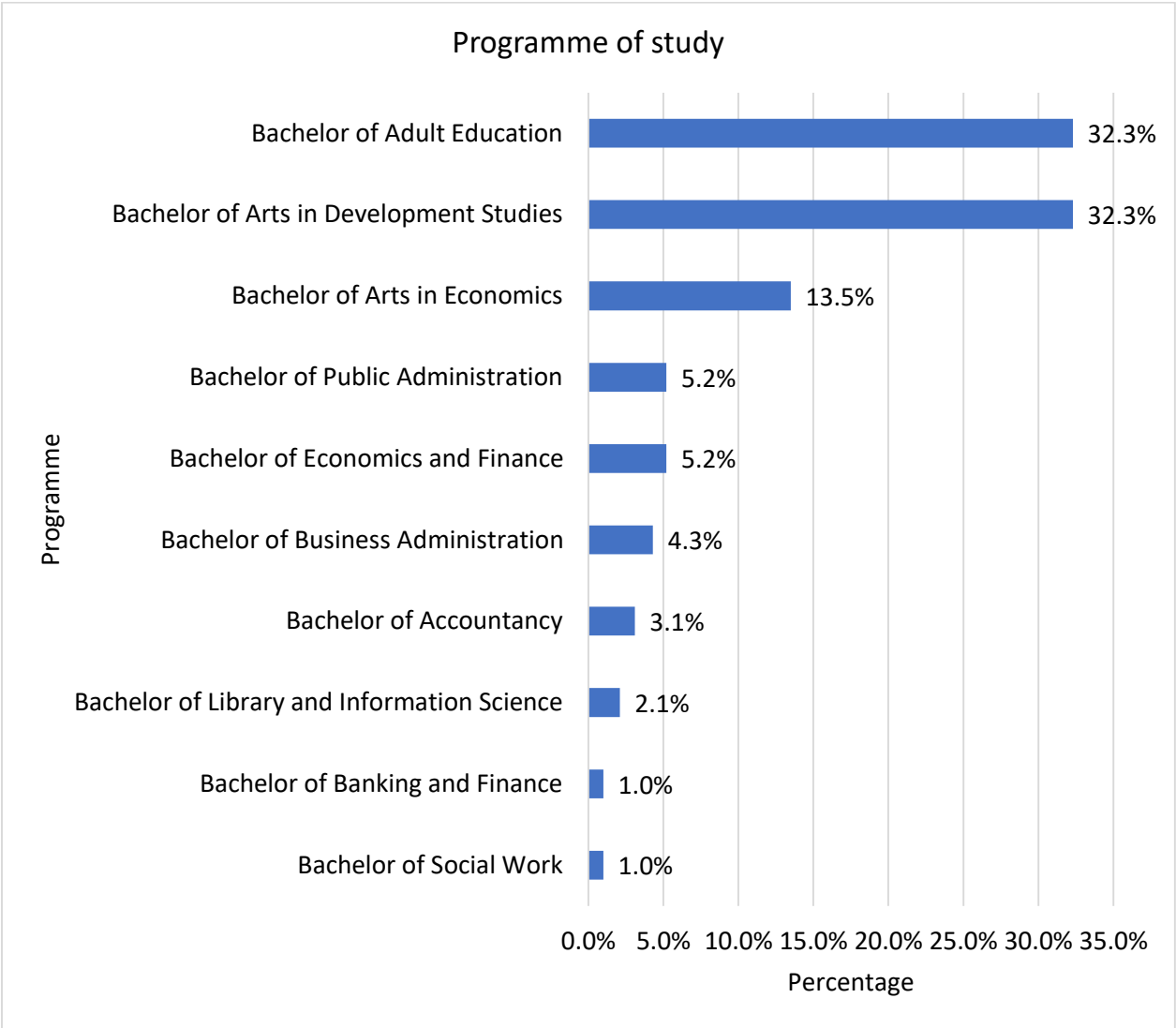


Figure 1: Programme of study

4.2 Students' proficiency in employability skills essential for graduate work readiness

Figure 2 below presents the distribution of students' views regarding whether employability skills were more important than specialist knowledge. The results revealed that a significant portion, 40% of the students, agree that employability skills were more important than specialist knowledge. A quarter of the students, 24%, were undecided on whether employability skills hold more importance than specialist knowledge. Furthermore, 36% of the students disagree that employability skills take precedence over specialist knowledge.

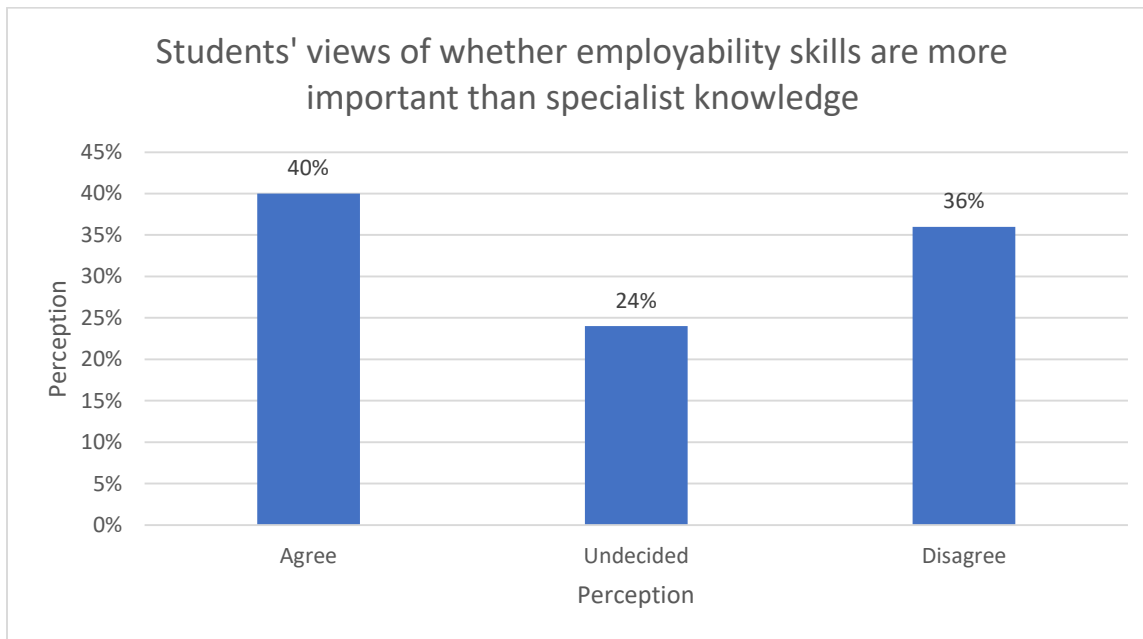


Figure 2: Students' views of whether employability skills are more important than specialist knowledge

Figure 3 below presents a snapshot of student's self-reporting on their confidence to take on a job. The results as presented in Figure revealed that the majority of students, comprising 53.1%, reported a moderate level of confidence in their preparedness for employment. A substantial proportion, 44.8% of the students, expressed high confidence in their ability to take on a job. A small minority, 2.1%, expressed a lack of confidence in taking on a job. While this percentage is relatively low, it still highlights a subset of students who felt less certain about their readiness for employment.

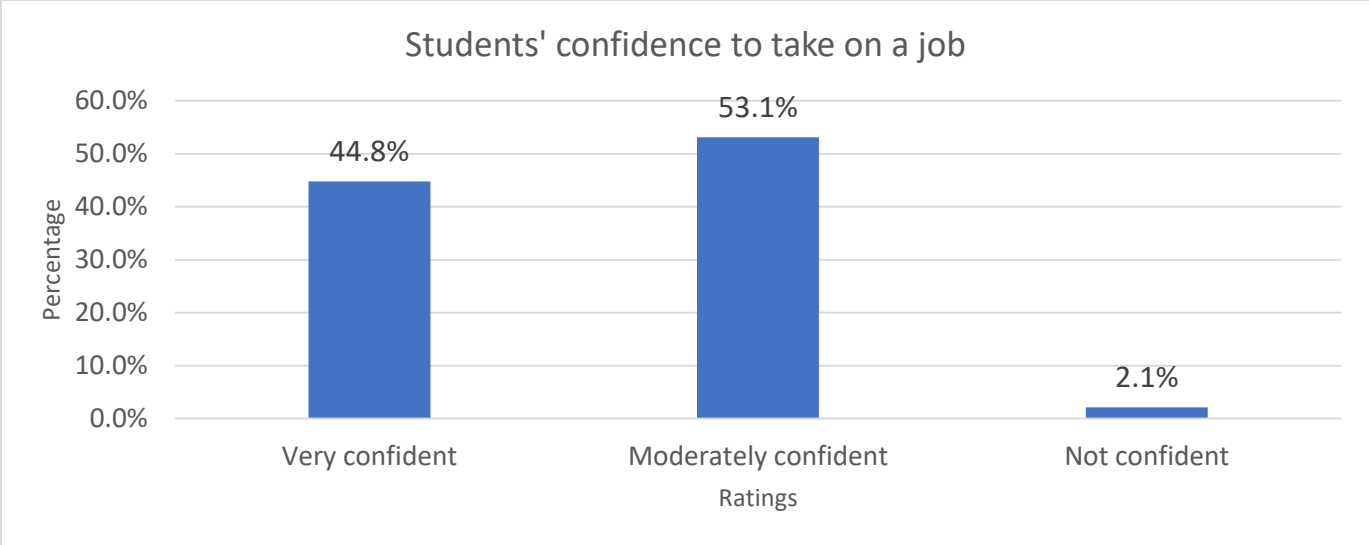


Figure 3: Students' confidence to take on a job

Table 2 presents percent distribution and cross-tabulation of students' confidence to take on a job by background characteristics. Students from public universities exhibited higher confidence levels (52.3%) than private university students (29%). The p-value of 0.031 indicates a statistically significant association between the university category and students' confidence levels. There is a slight difference in confidence levels between male and female students, with females (48.4%) showing a slightly higher confidence level than males (36.4%). However, the p-value of 0.505 suggests that this difference is not statistically significant. By age groups, the results revealed that confidence levels varied across age groups. Notably, those above 30 years expressed 100% confidence. However, the p-value of 0.68 suggests that the differences in confidence across age groups were not statistically significant.

Further analysis indicated that students' confidence to take on a job was strongly associated with type of programme. Students in educational programs show significantly higher confidence levels (75.8%) compared to those in Humanities & Social Sciences programs (28.6%). The p-value of 0.000 indicates a statistically significant association between the type of program and students' confidence levels.

Table 2: Percent distribution and cross-tabulation of students' confidence to take on a job by background characteristics.

Background characteristics	Students' confidence to take on a job			Total	# of students	P-value
	Very confident	Moderately confident	Not confident			
Category of university						0.031
Public	52.3	44.6	3.1	100	65	
Private	29	71	0	100	31	
Sex						0.505
Male	36.4	60.6	3	100	33	
Female	48.4	50	1.6	100	62	
Age						0.68
>20 years	0	100	0	100	1	
20-24 years	45.5	53.2	1.3	100	77	
25-29 years	41.2	52.9	5.9	100	17	
30 years +	100	0	0	100	1	
Type of programme						0.000
Educational programmes	75.8	24.2	0	100	33	
Humanities & Social Sciences	28.6	68.2	3.2	100	63	
Total	44.8	53.1	2.1	100	96	

Table 3 below presents students' level of competence on selected employability skills. The results as presented in Table 3 revealed that students demonstrate competence in analytical ability, with 43.8% being very competent and 51.0% moderately competent, indicating a well-rounded capability for analysis. A significant majority of students, 62.5%, were very competent in communication skills, showcasing a strength in this essential area. Regarding coping with multiple tasks, 60.4% were moderately competent while 37.5% were very competent in coping with multiple tasks, the distribution suggests that there might be room for improvement in managing concurrent responsibilities.

Creativity and innovation skills were notable, with 52.1% very competent, showcasing a capacity for original thinking and problem-solving. A significant 50.0% of students demonstrated very competent critical thinking skills with a customer focus, indicating a capacity for customer-oriented problem-solving. On decision-making skill, 55.2% indicated being very competent, suggesting a confident approach to making informed decisions. Entrepreneurial skills showed a

balanced distribution, with 42.7% very competent and 44.8% moderately competent, suggesting a decent level of readiness for entrepreneurial endeavours. While only 25.0% were very competent in ICT skills, a substantial 67.7% were moderately competent. Interpersonal skills demonstrate a good balance, with 44.8% very competent and 53.1% moderately competent. In addition, 51.0% were moderately competent in leadership skills, whilst 4.2% were not at all competent.

Further analysis indicated that presentation skills showed a good balance, with 54.2% being moderately competent while 38.5% were very competent. Problem-solving skills are distributed fairly evenly, with 41.7% very competent and 43.8% moderately competent. Research skills exhibited notable competence, with 64.6% of students being moderately competent. Furthermore, teamwork emerged as a notable strength, with 67.7% of students being very competent in this area. Finally, time management skills showed strength, with 58.3% of students being very competent while 37.5% moderately competent.

Table 3: Students' level of competence on selected employability skills

No.	Employability skills	Very competent	Moderately competent	Not at all competent
1.	Analytical ability	43.8%	51.0%	5.2%
2.	Communication	62.5%	36.5%	1.0%
3.	Coping with multiple tasks	37.5%	60.4%	2.1%
4.	Creativity/Innovativeness	52.1%	45.8%	2.1%
5.	Critical thinking	50.0%	41.7%	8.3%
6.	Decision-making	55.2%	40.6%	4.2%
7.	Entrepreneurial skills	42.7%	44.8%	12.5%
8.	ICT skills	25.0%	67.7%	7.3%
9.	Interpersonal skills	44.8%	53.1%	2.1%
10.	Leadership	44.8%	51.0%	4.2%
11.	Presentation skills	38.5%	54.2%	7.3%
12.	Problem-solving	41.7%	43.8%	14.5%
13.	Research skills	31.2%	64.6%	4.2%
14.	Team work	67.7%	28.1%	4.2%
15.	Time management	58.3%	37.5%	4.2%
	Average	46.4%	48.1%	5.6%

In addition to the quantitative data gathered from students regarding the employability skills crucial for graduate work readiness, the study conducted one-to-one interviews with lecturers to obtain qualitative data on the employability skills that students are exposed to. These interviews aimed to explore the employability skills that final-year students have been introduced to. The aim was to leverage the lecturers' experiences in identifying essential employability skills for students to be prepared for the workforce. The rationale behind this approach was to use the insights gained from lecturers' experiences to identify the employability skills students have been exposed to during their training in their respective programs. Based on the interview data from the lecturers, several employability skills were identified as crucial for students.

4.2.1 Employability skills essential for graduate work readiness that students have been exposed to

The findings revealed that research skills, community mobilisation, project planning, and evaluation were highlighted as essential skills for students' graduate work readiness.

4.2.1.1 Research Skills

Lecturers who participated in this study felt that research skills were essential for students' graduate work readiness. The participants emphasised the importance of research skills, including identifying research problems, writing research proposals, and conducting the entire research process. This also includes skills related to data collection tools and analysis using various statistical software. When asked what employability skills have students in your programme exposed to, one lecturer commented that:

There are various skills that students are exposed to... we teach them how to identify research problems, we also teach them how to write research proposals, how to conduct the whole research process, we also teach them how to analyse data using various statistical software such as SPSS, MS Excel, NVivo and so forth. So, we teach them all these skills, which are needed for those who are into research. The skills that we teach them actually expose students to the various schemes that organisations need to carry out their work, especially in the area of research that I teach. (KII, Lecturer 1)

I think most of the skills they are exposed to are research skills and community mobilisation, I think mostly its research skills because most of our students end up being field workers for various NGOs and they work in areas where they are

required to mobilise communities for different projects whether it's a health-related project, an agricultural related project. (KII, Lecturer 6)

It is evident from the lecturers' narratives that research skills are well-emphasised and important in preparing students for work. It is clear that lecturers actively impart various research skills to students. Additionally, the mention of community mobilisation indicates a focus on practical application, with students often becoming NGO fieldworkers.

4.2.1.2 Communication Skills

Communication was highlighted as a fundamental skill for employability. It was observed from the interviews that communication skills were emphasised as crucial for success in the workplace. This includes effectively communicating with different people, groups, and communities. The following were some of the comments from the lecturers during interviews:

I think for me mostly it should be skills, maybe being able to communicate, I think communication is a very important skill that everybody that has to be employed must have because when you enter the work space you get to communicate with different people and that skill is very important especially if you work in an area that requires you to be able to for instance to solicit for funds and talk to different groups maybe from diverse backgrounds, communication will be a very crucial skill to poses. (KII, Lecturer 2)

Okay, I think the skills that people should be able to possess at this point should go beyond the classroom. I think it's not so much about the knowledge that we acquire in class because a lot of that knowledge is already there on the internet... communication is a very important skill. (KII, Lecturer 1)

Okay, thank you, other than giving them the attachment opportunities, we teach them the communication or business communication where we actually explain to them the actual things that go on into the organisations. And so, we teach them the communications business skills, and so we actually teach them most of the skills. (KII, Lecturer 7)

The findings from the lecturers emphasise the critical importance of communication skills in the context of employability. All participants underscore the critical role of communication skills in employability. This aligns with the understanding that effective communication is fundamental in professional environments, especially when dealing with diverse groups and organisational processes.

4.2.1.3 Computer Literacy

The study's findings revealed that computer literacy was highly emphasised in this digital age, including proficiency in various software applications. In addition to general computer literacy, there is a specific emphasis on statistical and data analysis skills. This includes using statistical packages, manipulating data, and interpreting results. Based from the interview data, specific mention is made of statistical packages like E-views, STATA, r, and Python, as well as Microsoft packages like Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. The following were some of the excerpts from the interviews:

Then, I also believe that one should be able to have competence to be able to deal with different kinds of software on the computer because we are living in the digital age so being able, for instance, to use the statistical packages, being able to manipulate data, being able to summarize data for instance, being able to..., be proficient in the various Microsoft packages whether it is word, excel or PowerPoint because everything has gone digital so somebody at least should have some basic computer skills. (KII, Lecturer 3)

The skills that are needed for learners to be prepared and ready for employability are things to do with first of all they should be computer literate, I teach econometrics, introduction and advanced econometrics. In economics, we don't need learners that are able to calculate and find the value of x, we are now teaching learners how to use statistical packages such as E-views, STATA, r, as well as Python. These are statistical packages that are being used in industries such as the Bank of Zambia, as well as Zambia Revenue Authority. So, once we equip them with those skills, they will be given a head start in terms of what they will be doing. So, statistical skills are important as well as computer skills. So, those are skills that we are giving. (KII, Lecturer 4)

4.2.1.4 Project Planning and Management

Skills related to project planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation were highlighted. These skills are seen as practical and necessary for real-world applications, especially in fields like Development Studies. Lecturers who participated in this study felt that such skills were important for graduates. When inquired about the importance of project planning and management skills, one of the lecturers stated that:

I have already stated that all the skills that we are teaching, we give them... for instance, like I have pinpointed when the project or programme planning management and evaluation, the skill they get, one how to plan the project, so they have that skill how to plan a project, they are able to organise, they are able to implement a project and its phased out and they have also the ability to evaluate the project to find out what the project has achieved and to what extent. These are also the skills that they are given. (KII, Lecturer 4)

4.2.1.5 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was identified as a key skill for navigating the complexities of the modern workplace. This includes the ability to understand both verbal and non-verbal communication, and the importance of managing emotions in a professional setting.

Then I also believe other important skills like emotional intelligence okay, we are living in a world where people's emotions are very raw and every little thing that you say can be taken out of context so it is very important that anybody that seeks to be employed has very good emotional intelligence, they should be able to pick up both the verbal and non-verbal communication. I think emotional intelligence is very key as well. (KII, Lecturer 5)

4.2.1.6 Mentorship and Soft Skills

Beyond academic knowledge, participants stressed the importance of mentorship and the development of soft skills such as time management, discipline, organization, teamwork, and values and principles. Lecturers were seen as mentors, guiding students on values and principles.

So, a lecturer is not only a teacher who solves x and y on the board. I am a mentor to them, as well as a contact person... mentorship, I talk about the values, the principles that learners should have such as time keeping, being disciplined, issues to do with being generally organised because work requires organisation. (KII, Lecturer 2)

These findings highlight the importance of mentorship, organisational skills, and other soft skills in addition to technical skills in preparing students for employability. In summary, a combination of technical, interpersonal, and practical skills is deemed essential for students' readiness for employability in various sectors, particularly in research-related and development fields.

4.3 Approaches of integrating employability skills training into university programmes

The second objective of the study sought to establish the approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into the selected university programmes. The results indicated that guest speakers were widely incorporated in the programmes of study, with 72.8% of respondents reporting having had an opportunity for this approach. Research opportunities were commonly integrated, with 71.7% of students reporting this approach to enhance life skills through academic exploration. Furthermore, mentorship and guidance were highly prevalent (68.5%), indicating the acknowledgement of the impact of personal guidance on students' life skills and career development. Networking events were widely embraced, with 65.2% of respondents reporting this activity. Career counselling was also highly prevalent, with 62.0% of respondents reporting this approach.

Career workshops were commonly utilised (52.2%), reflecting a proactive approach to providing students with insights and skills for their future careers. The integration of professional development courses was relatively high, with 51.1% of respondents reporting this approach to enhance life skills. Career advising resources are also widely used, with 44.6% of respondents indicating their incorporation. Furthermore, involvement with professional organisations was relatively common, with 41.3% of respondents reporting this approach to integrate life skills.

Internship placements were reported by a significant proportion (34.8%), indicating the recognition of experiential learning as a valuable avenue for life skills development. Industry-specific projects are implemented to a moderate extent, with about 20.7% of the respondents indicating their use. These findings are presented in Figure 4 below.

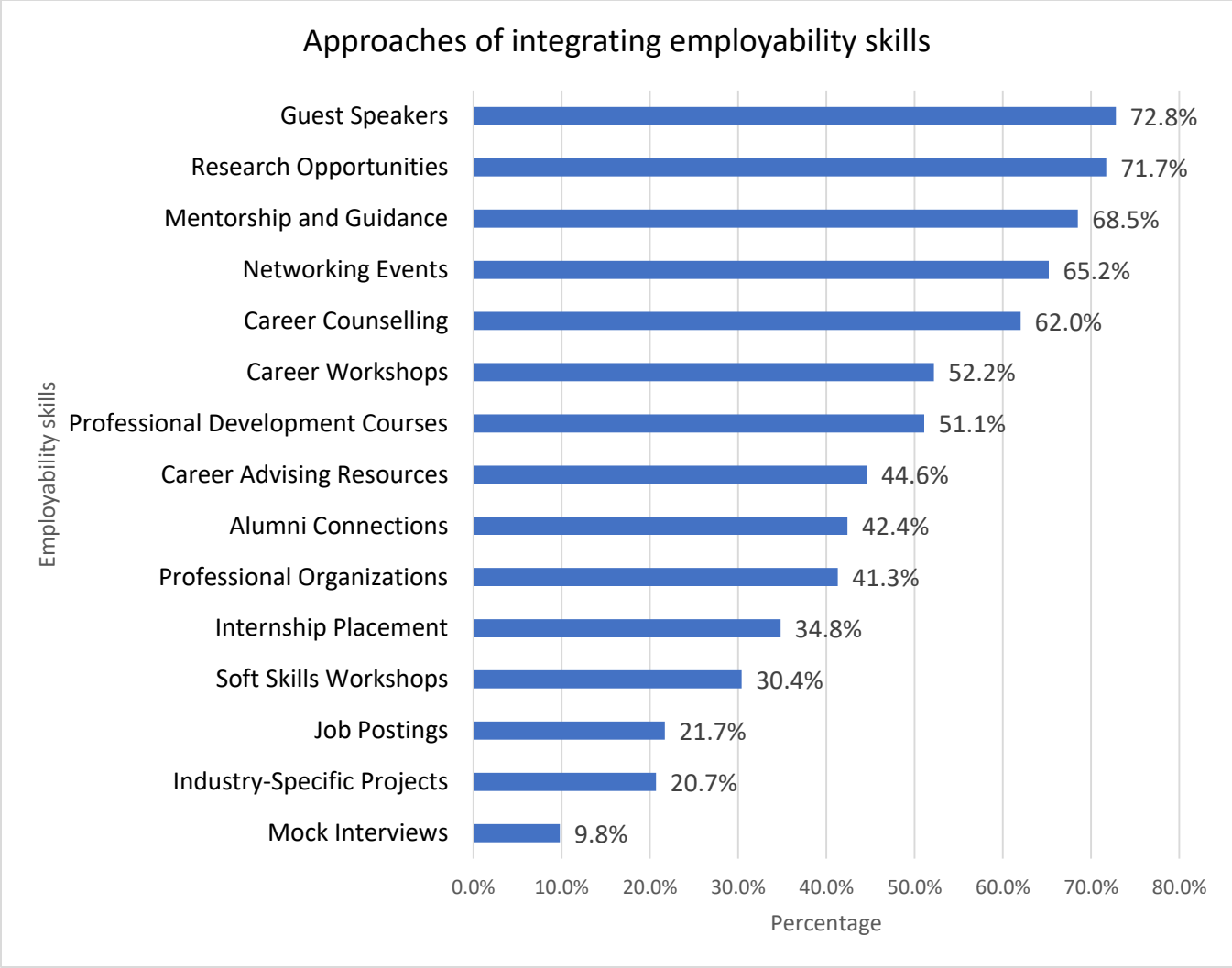


Figure 4: Approaches of integrating employability skills

Apart from the quantitative data collected from the students on approaches of integrating employability skills in university programmes, the study also collected qualitative data from lecturers through one-to-one interviews. The idea was to tap into lecturers’ experiences on classroom instruction methods they apply to integrate employability skills. The rationale was to use lecturers’ experiences as a basis for developing approaches to integrating employability skills training into university programmes. From the data that emerged, it was evident that universities integrate employability skills training into their programmes through various approaches. It was observed from the interviews that the integration of employability skills involved incorporating practical aspects into lessons, simulations, group assignments, field trips, presentations, peer teaching, industrial attachments and internships.

4.3.1 Incorporating Skills into Course Content

The study revealed that lecturers integrated employability skills, such as emotional intelligence, into specific courses. For example, Conflict Management is used as a platform to teach emotional intelligence in handling and communicating with people. During interviews with lecturers, one lecturer commented that:

For instance, when you talk about things like emotional intelligence, one of the courses I teach is Conflict Management. In teaching Conflict Management, I integrate the concept of emotional intelligence, recognising the inevitability of conflicts in society due to diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Despite following a specific course content, I incorporate these aspects casually into lessons, often during illustrations, to emphasize how emotional intelligence is crucial in handling and communicating with people. Similarly, in research courses, students are exposed to various methods, with practical applications using computer-based statistical packages like SPSS and Epi Info as an integral part of the course structure. (KII, Lecturer 1)

4.3.2 Practical Work and Simulations

It was observed that practical work was highly emphasized, and simulations were conducted to expose students to real-world scenarios. This included hands-on experiences, presentations, and field reports, providing practical exposure to the work they might engage in post-graduation.

So, to be able to help them we do practical work so sometimes we do simulations, we make them do presentations. Sometimes also they go out in the field and have them write field reports as a practical way to expose them to some of the work that they are going to be engaged in once they graduate. (KII, Lecturer 4)

Yeah, so, I think simulations are very good because when you simulate it prepares them and whatever the experience after school, it doesn't come as a shock or something strange to them because they had at once been in that particular position. Sometimes the message may not be conveyed accurately when you are just speaking to them but when they put themselves in that particular position then I think that it actually helps them not only to remember but also visualise how it could be when they eventually leave school. (KII, Lecturer 6)

It is evident from the lecturers' narratives that practical work and simulations were highly considered and used to integrate employability skills into the lessons.

4.3.3 Practical Group Assignments and Projects

The findings revealed that group assignments were common and used to foster teamwork and identify group leadership roles. Participants explained that students were given practical assignments, including group projects where they develop business ideas based on the knowledge gained in class. Additionally, data analysis projects were assigned, covering the entire process from data gathering to cleaning and analysis. It was noted from the data that these assignments often involved applying theoretical knowledge to real-life situations, such as market structures, carwash businesses, mobile hair salons, and soft drink businesses.

In managerial economics we give learners group assignments, that's what I have done even now. The idea is for them to be able to work in groups and when they are working in groups, we need to identify who the leader is, we need to identify who the supporting people are and also the brains behind that group... issues to do with mobile hair saloon, issues to do with setting up a soft drink business and then try to see how the classroom knowledge applies to things like profit maximisations, short run versus long run cost. So, those are some of the approaches that we are using. Sometimes, we give them class exercises where there is peer teaching, one comes to the front to solve a problem that is also part of helping. (KII, Lecturer 7)

Yes, one example I have already cited is to give them a practical assignment, a group assignment where they work together to develop a business idea and then use the knowledge they gathered in class. The other aspect is to give them a data analysis project where they are able to... from the start of gathering data to cleaning until its analysis. So, those are some of the two I can speak of. (KII, Lecturer 1)

It is clear from the lecturers' narratives that there is an emphasis on practical application and group collaboration. Students are assigned group projects, encouraging them to work together to apply classroom knowledge to real-world scenarios.

4.3.4 Peer Teaching and Class Exercises

The study also found that lecturers used peer teaching to integrate employability skills into the lessons. Peer teaching was incorporated into class exercises where students come to the front to solve problems. This approach helped reinforce learning and understanding of concepts through teaching.

Sometimes, we give them class exercises where there is peer teaching, one comes to the front to solve a problem. (KII, Lecturer 3)

4.3.5 Industrial Attachments and Exposure to Actual Industry

The study's findings revealed that universities allow students to go on industrial attachments, allowing them to gain practical experience in real work environments. Lecturers who participated in this study felt that exposure to actual industries helps students bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Okay, what we are doing to prepare the students we teach them both the theory and the practical aspect. We don't just teach them the theory but also the practical aspect. We give them the time to do industrial attachment, and so through the industrial attachments, they learn how to go and work once they have graduated. (KII, Administrator)

The other point that I have already stated is that we now allow them to be exposed to actual industry so that they can now tell the theoretical and practical aspects. (KII, Lecturer 2)

4.3.6 Formal Assessments and Internship Evaluations

Lecturers reported that assessment is conducted through reports generated during internships and industrial attachments. Participants explained that supervisors from the organisations where students are attached play a key role in the assessment, providing feedback on their performance. Formal assessments are conducted based on students' performance in various activities and internships. It was noted from the data that students are evaluated on factors such as seriousness, motivation, and preparedness, reflecting their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings.

Yeah, so, how we assess, wherever they have been attached there is a report and we follow them. So, once they are attached to the organisation, different organisations we go to those organisations we follow them and go and see and observe what they are doing. Then, also, the supervisors from where they have been attached, they also do the assessment they write to us and we follow them to see what they are doing in that organisation, and so, that is how we do the assessment. (KII, Lecturer 6)

So, we do formal assessments based on what it is they are doing. And even these internships I have spoken about, the learners are assessed based on their seriousness, based on their motivation, as well as their preparedness by way of

*looking at the tasks they are completing and how well they are completing them.
(KII, Lecturer 5)*

In a nutshell, it is evident from the study findings that the integration of employability skills training involves a combination of theoretical and practical approaches, including simulations, group assignments, peer teaching, and real-world experiences through internships and industrial attachments. This holistic approach aims to prepare students for the challenges and expectations of the workforce.

4.4 Promoting work readiness - the impact of employability skills training in university programmes for final-year students

The study findings demonstrated that employability skills were deemed crucial, especially considering the goal of most graduates to secure employment or start their enterprises. The findings indicated that exposure to industry and practical experiences helped build confidence and competence among students as narrated by the lecturers. Five (5) themes emerged from the data revealing how employability skills training in university programmes promoted work readiness among final-year students.

4.4.1 Importance of Employability Skills

Lecturers felt that employability skills were very important in promoting work readiness among their students. The participants emphasised the critical importance of employability skills. Given Zambia's history and the focus of the curriculum on job-seeking, these skills are seen as extremely important. Lecturers explained that graduates are expected to secure employment or start their own enterprises, making employability skills a key aspect of their education.

They are very important, I mean if they were not important then what is the whole purpose of you coming to school because considering our history as Zambians most our curriculum trains us to look for a job, so everybody definitely wants to be able to get a job when they leave school. So, these employability skills are extremely important because most of our graduates are looking to get a job and start their own enterprise. (KII, Lecturer 1)

4.4.2 Practical Application and Field Trips

The study showed that incorporating practical elements like field trips is crucial for improving students' performance and work readiness. Lecturers who participated in this study explained that

practical experiences are essential in enhancing the skills and competencies of students. The viewpoint was the same in the two universities visited.

Absolutely, that is why we incorporate all these practicals, like the field trips, and things like that and we have seen that there has been a dramatic improvement definitely in the manner in which students are performing. (KII, Lecturer 4)

4.4.3 Industry Trust and Recognition

Lecturers felt that the exposure of students to industries and professionals is beneficial. Participants explained that graduates who have worked with industry professionals are perceived to be recognised and trusted by those in the industry. They believe employers are more likely to trust graduates with practical experience and the required skills.

Yeah, once these students are exposed to the industries and people from the industry who have actually maybe worked with these people and they are able to say oh yeah, they have the skills that we need so in most cases those that have allowed our students to work with them they don't have issues actually they have the trust because they know exactly to say that these guys yes, they have the capacity they have the competency to work, that one is very vivid. (KII, Lecturer 7)

4.4.4. Promotion of Work Readiness and Job Performance

The study findings revealed that the integration of employability skills training in university programs is viewed as a mechanism for promoting work readiness among students. Lecturers who participated in this study felt that the skills taught contribute to the development of competency and confidence, making students ready to enter the workforce. It was also noted from the study findings that there is a perception that students who undergo employability skills training perform well in their jobs. The assertion is that once confirmed as graduates, these students excel in their respective positions, indicating the effectiveness of the skills imparted.

...as I have already stated it's the same things of course employability skills are what we are teaching and once we have taught, they become ready to work, yes that's what we actually do, they actually develop the competency in them and then the skills and this afterwards would make them have that confidence to do the work. (KII, Lecturer 3)

Yes, our students once they undergo through all these issues once they are confirmed graduates trust me, they do a good job where they are, they do a good job wherever they are. So, that one is vivid. (KII, Lecturer 5)

To sum up, the emerging themes revolved around the practical application of skills, the perceived importance of employability skills for job-seeking graduates, the impact of skills training on job performance, the recognition and trust gained from industry exposure, and the role of employability skills training in promoting overall work readiness among students.

4.5 Challenges universities were facing in integrating employability skills training in degree programmes

The study findings revealed a number of challenges relating to integrating employability skills training in degree programmes.

4.5.1 Faculty Competence

The findings revealed the difficulty in integrating practical skills when lecturers lack industrial experience. The data highlights the importance of lecturers with an industrial background to effectively impart practical skills to students. The confluence of industry and academic experience is essential for providing students a balanced view.

Sometimes particularly if you look at it..., sometimes it is very difficult, sometimes we have lecturers maybe they come straight from school and they don't have the industrial skill I think it would be very difficult for them to be able to impact such skills into the students because they have never really had experience of the outside world. That is why at this institution normally when they are recruiting lecturers, they usually like to recruit those that have an industrial background because then they have confluence of both industry and academic and they are able to give a balanced view to the students on how it is out there and how can you combine what you are getting here and what you expect to find out there. (KII, Lecturer 6)

In agreeing with the views of KII Lecturer 6, another male lecturer with industrial experience also added on to say that:

So, some of the challenges could be in that area where you may have a lecturer coming straight from school and do not have experience in the outside world. (KII, Lecturer 7)

The findings highlight a concern about the potential challenges faced by lecturers who come straight from school without prior industrial experience.

4.5.2 Challenges in Teaching Practical Aspects

The study findings revealed that lecturers complained of limited time and resources for practical aspects of teaching. Lecturers expressed challenges in teaching practical aspects due to constraints such as limited time, resources, and the demand from the corporate world. The role of universities in teaching practical skills is viewed as challenging, especially when there is pressure to cover theoretical content. Lecturers explained they faced challenges in providing hands-on experiences due to how the course outlines were structured.

Like I have said the role of the university is not teach industry staff to learners, learners need principles so the university equips them with those principles, the demand now is that the university should teach the learners practical aspect is one of the biggest challenges because first of all we have the course outline, how can they apply if they don't even know. So, we have to teach them and time is a factor. So, if we teach them one concept and we want them see how it works at Bank of Zambia it defeats the whole purpose. So, that's one of the biggest challenges. Time, resources and also the demand from the corporate world. (KII, Lecturer 1)

It is evident that teaching practical aspects is a significant challenge as universities primarily focus on imparting principles rather than industry-specific skills. The demand for practical knowledge conflicts with course outlines, making it difficult to allocate time for application. Time, resources, and the expectations from the corporate world pose significant challenges.

4.5.3 Lack of Organised Integration of Skills

Participants highlighted the absence of an organised system for integrating practical skills into the learning process. The lack of appreciation and value for integrating skills into courses was noted, indicating a potential gap in recognising the importance of skill development alongside course content.

There is no organised system on how these skills are to be integrated, if there was an organised manner in which these skills are to be integrated, I think it would be much easier we don't have an organised in which these skills are to be integrated into the learning process. (KII, Lecturer 3)

In agreeing with the views of KII lecturer 3, another female lecturer also commented that:

The other thing is that people just focus on the course content ignoring the skills. The lack of appreciation and value in integrating these skills into the courses. (KII, Lecturer 5)

4.5.4 Issues with Student Attachments

Challenges related to student attachments were mentioned, including difficulties in finding opportunities or accommodations in some industries. Lecturers explained that some students face challenges with the voluntary nature of their work during attachments, and issues with allowances.

The challenges could be many yeah, sometimes it is just difficult to just have an opportunity or to have the students be accommodated in some industries. (KII, Lecturer 2)

The challenges....., our students once they are attached, they just do the voluntary work and so these are some of the challenges that they face moving from where they are and going for work on a daily basis and maybe they are not given allowances in some industries and so, those are some of the challenges that we mostly face. So, on the part of the students that is the most challenge we have, the upkeep and accommodation when they are attached. (KII, Lecturer 4)

4.5.5 Weak Links Between Industry and University

Another challenge that was identified in integrating employability skills training in university degree programmes is the perceived weak connection between the industry and the university. Lecturers who participated in this study felt that this lack of strong link is seen as a challenge, leading to both entities operating somewhat independently without a seamless integration of skills and knowledge. The following were some of the excerpts from the interviews:

The other challenge is that there are weak links between the industry and the university, there isn't that connection and because of this you find that the university tend to operate on its own and also the industry tends to operate on its own. (KII, Lecturer 1)

I think....., when you see currently there are verry weak connections between the industry and the university which hinders the integration of skills, this has led to both parties operating independently from each, instead of working hand in hand together. (KII, Lecturer 7)

The study shows that weak links between the university and the industry is one of the challenges faced by universities in integrating employability skills in degree programmes. According to the lecturers, there is a lack of connection between these two entities, leading to them operating independently rather than collaboratively. The absence of strong connections between the industry and the university hinders the integration of skills.

4.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented findings of the study following the analysis of data. The chapter presented the findings on how proficiency in employability skills training within selected university programs impact work readiness among final-year students; approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into selected university programmes; and challenges universities face in integrating employability skills training in their programmes. The next chapter discusses the findings of the study in light of the reviewed literature and research objectives.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the integration of employability skills training in university programmes and their effectiveness in promoting graduate work readiness in selected universities in Zambia. The previous chapter has presented the findings of the study. This chapter endeavours to discuss the findings of the study in the light of reviewed literature and research objectives set out in the first chapter of this study.

5.1 How proficiency in employability skills training within selected university programmes impact work readiness among final-year students

The study's first objective sought to assess how proficiency in employability skills training within selected university programmes impact work readiness among final-year students. The study identified several key employability skills that contribute to graduate work readiness. These skills are were deemed crucial for success in various professional fields. The findings revealed that research skills, communication skills, computer literacy, project planning and management, emotional intelligence, mentorship, and soft skills were highlighted as essential for students' graduate work readiness. These findings align with a recent study by Hoque et al. (2023) that investigated desired employability skills and graduates' work readiness in Bangladesh. Hoque et al. (2023) identified key skills and traits such as communication, teamwork and collaboration, problem-solving, computer literacy and technical skill, honesty and integrity, hardworking and willingness to take on extra work, achievement orientation, adaptability, time management, leadership, personality, and academic results and knowledge.

The findings of this study suggest that employability skills in Zambian university degree programmes primarily emphasise theoretical knowledge, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, whereas industry demands a more practical skillset, including hands-on experience, adaptability, digital literacy, and professional work ethics. Employers often find that graduates excel in academic knowledge but struggle with workplace readiness, critical thinking in real-world scenarios, and emotional intelligence (Prajapati, Sharma, & Sharma, 2017). This gap highlights the need for stronger collaboration between universities and industries to align curricula with labour market needs, ensuring that graduates possess both foundational knowledge and the practical competencies required for successful employment.

The implications of these findings are significant for both academic institutions and students aiming for success in the professional realm. The study identified a comprehensive set of key employability skills essential for graduate work readiness (Refer section 4.2 of the report). The emphasis on these skills aligns with the broader context of employability requirements in various professional fields. Overall, these implications underscore the need for educational institutions to prioritise the development of a well-rounded skill set to enhance students' readiness for the dynamic and competitive job market.

The study findings highlight a diverse range of competencies in employability skills among students. Key strengths include robust analytical abilities, with 43.8% demonstrating high competence and 51.0% exhibiting moderate competence. Communication skills emerge as a significant strength, with a majority (62.5%) being highly competent in this essential area. Proficiency in coping with multiple tasks was notable, though there is room for improvement, as 60.4% show moderate competence. Creativity and innovation skills were evident, with 52.1% displaying high competence, indicating an aptitude for original thinking. Strong critical thinking with a customer focus is observed in 50.0% of students. Decision-making skills are confident, with 55.2% being highly competent. Entrepreneurial skills demonstrate a balanced distribution, suggesting a decent level of readiness for entrepreneurial endeavours. While ICT skills have potential for improvement, interpersonal skills exhibit a good balance, and leadership skills show moderate competence. Presentation, problem-solving, research, teamwork, and time management skills are also notable strengths, portraying a well-rounded set of competencies in various employability skills among students.

In relation to previous studies, the findings of this study are consistent with that of Daisy and Nair (2018) who found that students exhibited competence in effective communication, critical & creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, interpersonal relationship, empathy, coping with stress and emotion. However, these findings are not in line with Hoque et al (2023) who found that graduates mostly lack the necessary skills as envisaged by employers. Therefore, it is important to consider these employability skills when designing interventions aimed at improving graduate work readiness and performance in Zambia.

The study also explored how employability skills training in selected university programmes promotes work readiness among final-year students. The study findings demonstrated that

employability skills were deemed crucial, especially considering the goal of most graduates to secure employment or start their enterprises. Consistent with the finding by Nivedita and Singh (2016), the study found that exposure to industry and practical experiences helped build confidence and competence among students. The study findings revealed that the integration of employability skills training in the university programs is viewed as a mechanism for promoting work readiness among students. It was observed that the skills taught contribute to the development of competency and confidence, making students ready to enter the workforce. It was also noted from the study findings that there is a perception that students who undergo employability skills training perform well in their job. Similarly, Nivedita and Singh (2016) observed that embedding the employability-skills program in the university curriculum plays a key role in shaping students' personal and social competencies. The findings of the study suggest a recognition of the critical importance of employability skills, particularly in light of the common goal among graduates to secure employment or initiate entrepreneurial ventures. Overall, the study suggests that a focus on employability skills is not only responsive to the career aspirations of graduates but also integral to building their confidence, competence, and broader personal and social capabilities.

The study findings showed that the incorporation of practical elements, such as field trips, is crucial for improving students' performance and work readiness. Lecturers who participated in this study explained that practical experiences are important in enhancing the skills and competencies of students. Lecturers felt that the exposure of students to industries and professionals is beneficial. Participants explained that graduates who have worked with industry professionals are perceived to be recognised and trusted by those in the industry. They believe that employers are more likely to trust graduates who have practical experience and possess the required skills. In the same way, there is a diversity of opinions among the students, with a substantial portion leaning towards the belief that employability skills are more important.

In relation to previous studies, the current study aligns with previous research findings, emphasising the importance of life skills training programs in enhancing students' cognitive, social, and self-management skills. Somasundaram (2018) demonstrated that such programs positively change attitude and behavior, preparing students to face real-life challenges effectively. Moreover, the impact of internship programs on life skills learning and their direct

influence on graduates' job preparedness and work readiness, as indicated by Prianto, Asmuni, and Maisaroh (2017), resonates with the current study's emphasis on practical experiences and industry exposure. Additionally, Prajapati, Sharma, and Sharma (2017) underscore the significance of integrating life skills education into the curriculum, addressing the contemporary needs of students. Their observations align with the current study's recognition of the crucial role of employability skills in motivating students, instilling self-confidence, sharpening thought processes, strengthening cognitive abilities, and preparing them to face the challenges of everyday life. These findings emphasize the multifaceted benefits of incorporating life skills and employability training into university programs

5.2 Approaches of integrating employability skills training into university programmes

Incorporating employability skills into university curricula is a viable solution to bridging a wide gap between the graduate 'students' skills and the demands of the work environment (Andrews & Higson, 2008). The study's second objective sought to establish the approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into the university programmes. The results of the study indicate that various approaches are employed to enhance life skills and career development among students. Guest speakers are widely utilized, with 72.8% of respondents having had opportunities to benefit from this approach. Additionally, research opportunities, mentorship, guidance, networking events, and career counseling are prevalent, emphasizing the recognition of the impact of personal guidance on students' life skills and career paths. Career workshops, professional development courses, career advising resources, and involvement with professional organizations are also commonly utilized strategies. Furthermore, a significant proportion of students (34.8%) reported internship placements, highlighting the acknowledgment of experiential learning as valuable for life skills development. This aligns with Scott et al (2019) who reported that programmes that offer internships, placements, or work-based learning experiences provide students with hands-on exposure to the working environment, building specific job skills and confidence. The study suggests a proactive approach to providing students with insights and skills for their future careers through these varied methods.

The implications of these findings are significant for both universities and students in terms of enhancing employability skills and career development. The study findings highlight the diversity of approaches used to integrate employability skills training into university programs.

This diversity, ranging from guest speakers to internship placements, indicates a proactive and multifaceted approach to preparing students for the workforce. The acknowledgment of internship placements as valuable for life skills development underscores the importance of experiential learning. This suggests that universities recognize the significance of providing students with practical, real-world experiences to complement their academic knowledge. These findings are supported by the works of Prajapati, Sharma and Sharma (2017) who argue that employability skill education cannot be facilitated based on information or discussion alone but also through experimental learning such as practical experience, and reinforcement of the skills for each student in a supportive learning environment.

Specifically, the study findings revealed that lecturers integrated employability skills, such as emotional intelligence, into specific courses. These findings indicate lecturers' thoughtful and strategic approach in integrating employability skills, particularly emotional intelligence, into specific courses. This approach enhances the practical application of these skills and underscores the importance of preparing students for the complexities of the professional world by integrating relevant skills into their academic learning experience.

The study also found that practical work was highly emphasised, and simulations were conducted to expose students to real-world scenarios. This included hands-on experiences, presentations, and field reports, providing practical exposure to the work they might engage in post-graduation. These findings suggest that the academic programs prioritise practical and applied learning experiences to better prepare students for the challenges and expectations of the professional world. This approach aims to equip graduates with theoretical knowledge and the practical skills and experiences necessary for a successful transition into their post-graduation careers. Similarly, previous research has shown that courses can use industry-related case studies and incorporate assignments that reflect job-related tasks, making learning more relevant to the workplace (Sreeramana, Suresh, & Pavithra, 2015).

The study findings revealed a prevalent use of group assignments in the academic programs to promote teamwork while identifying leadership roles within student groups. During interviews, lecturers explained that practical assignments were commonly assigned, including group projects focused on developing business ideas. These assignments bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, requiring students to apply their understanding in

practical scenarios. The emphasis on hands-on projects aligns with Nivedita and Singh's (2016), which advocates for small group activities to integrate employability skills training. This strategy fosters collaboration and peer learning and prepares students for professional challenges by simulating real-world scenarios within the academic setting.

The study revealed that lecturers employed peer teaching as a method to integrate employability skills into lessons. This involved incorporating peer teaching into class exercises, where students took turns coming to the front to solve problems. The use of peer teaching was observed to reinforce learning and enhance understanding of concepts by allowing students to actively engage in teaching each other. These findings are consistent with the findings by Nair and Fahimirad (2019) who found that other important methods used to facilitate life skills learning included peer supported learning and practical community development projects. Similarly, Nivedita and Singh (2016) observed that role playing and peer teaching as approaches provide an excellent opportunity for developing various employability skills among university students especially. However, the findings of this study differ with those by (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Prajapati, Sharma & Sharma, 2017) who reported discussions, debates and brain storming as methods used by educators in integrating employability skills. The difference here could be due to the various in the location in which the studies were conducted and study population used.

The findings of the study revealed that universities provide students with the opportunity to go on industrial attachments, allowing them to gain practical experience in real work environments. The findings suggested that exposure to actual industries helps students bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This is consistent with the findings by Srinivas, Suresh and Aithal (2015) who also found that work-based learning and internships are possible methods of integrating employability skills in university programmes. Programmes that offer internships, placements, or work-based learning experiences provide students with hands-on exposure to the working environment, building specific job skills and confidence (Scott, Connell, Thomson & Willison 2019).

5.4 Challenges universities are facing in integrating employability skills training in degree programmes

The last objective of the study sought to identify challenges universities are facing in integrating employability skills training in their programmes. The study findings revealed a number of challenges relating to the integration of employability skills training in degree programmes. These included faculty competencies, challenges in teaching practical aspects, lack of organised integration of skills, issues with student attachments, and weak links between industry and university. These findings are supported by previous research (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Nivedita & Singh, 2016; Prajapati, Sharma & Sharma, 2017; Nair & Fahimirad, 2019).

The implications of the study findings suggest a series of challenges in integrating employability skills training into degree programs. Firstly, faculty competence stands out as a crucial factor, with challenges arising when lecturers lack industrial experience. The study emphasizes the importance of recruiting educators with both industrial and academic backgrounds to ensure a balanced perspective and effective impartation of practical skills. Secondly, challenges in teaching practical aspects are evident, driven by limited time, resources, and the pressure to cover theoretical content. The demand for practical knowledge conflicts with structured course outlines, making it difficult to allocate sufficient time for hands-on experiences. This is supported by the findings of Scott et al (2019).

The lack of an organized system for integrating practical skills into the learning process emerges as another challenge. This indicates a potential gap in recognizing the importance of skill development alongside traditional course content, raising concerns about the effectiveness of skill integration. Issues related to student attachments pose significant challenges, including difficulties in finding opportunities, securing accommodations, and managing the voluntary nature of work. Problems with allowances and daily commutes during attachments further hinder students' practical experiences.

Lastly, the weak links between industry and university present a substantial challenge. The study identifies a lack of strong connections between these entities, leading to independent operations and hindering the seamless integration of skills and knowledge. These challenges underscore the

need for strategic interventions and collaborative efforts to address the complexities of integrating employability skills training into university degree programs.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in the context of the research objectives and relevant literature. The chapter discussed findings on how proficiency in employability skills training within selected university programmes enhances work readiness among final-year students; establish the approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into the selected university programmes; and challenges universities face in integrating employability skills training in their programmes. The next chapter concludes the study and provides recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0. Introduction

This chapter concludes the study on integrating employability skills training in selected university degree programs for graduate work readiness in Zambia. It further gives recommendations in line with the study's findings and recommendations for further research. Finally, a summary is provided at the end of the chapter.

6.1 Conclusions

Conclusions were made based on the following research questions:

- 1) How does proficiency in employability skills training within selected university programmes impact work readiness among final-year students?
- 2) What are the approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into selected university programmes?
- 3) What challenges are universities facing in integrating employability skills training in their programmes?

6.1.1 How does proficiency in employability skills training within selected university programmes impact work readiness among final-year students?

The findings revealed a comprehensive set of essential skills, aligning with the broader employability requirements in various professional fields. Research skills, communication skills, computer literacy, project planning and management, emotional intelligence, and mentorship and soft skills emerged as critical components for students' preparedness for the professional realm. These implications have significant relevance for academic institutions and students aspiring to succeed in diverse workplaces.

The recognition of research skills underscores the importance of fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and data analysis among students. Communication skills, identified as a fundamental requirement, highlight the necessity for effective interaction with different individuals and groups. The emphasis on computer literacy, especially in statistical and data analysis software, reflects the essential role of technology in the modern workforce. The focus on project planning and management skills recognizes the practical applications expected from

graduates. Emotional intelligence is acknowledged as a key competency, emphasizing the importance of understanding and managing emotions in professional settings. Furthermore, mentorship and soft skills, including time management, discipline, and teamwork, are recognised as integral aspects of preparing students for the demands of the workplace.

The study findings also highlight specific strengths among students in various employability skills. Robust analytical abilities, strong communication skills, proficiency in coping with multiple tasks, creativity and innovation, and confident decision-making skills were identified as key competencies.

The findings underscore the critical importance of employability skills in light of graduates' common goals to secure employment or initiate entrepreneurial ventures. The study established that the integration of employability skills training within university programs emerged as a crucial mechanism for fostering work readiness among students.

The skills taught were identified as contributors to the development of competency and confidence, making students well-prepared for the workforce. Moreover, there was a perceived connection between employability skills training and job performance. The study emphasised the role of practical elements, such as field trips, in improving students' performance and work readiness. The findings also reflected a diversity of opinions among students, with a substantial portion leaning towards the belief that employability skills are more important for one to be work ready. Overall, the study underscores the multifaceted benefits of incorporating life skills and employability training into university programs, addressing contemporary needs and preparing students comprehensively for the challenges of the professional world.

6.1.2 What are the approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into selected university programmes?

Various approaches were identified in the integration of employability skills training, including guest speakers, research opportunities, mentorship, guidance, networking events, career counseling, and internship placements. Practical work, simulations, group assignments, and peer teaching were prominent in academic programs, prioritising practical and applied learning experiences to better equip graduates for post-graduation careers.

The prevalent use of group assignments and peer teaching fosters teamwork, leadership identification, and practical application of knowledge. The emphasis on hands-on projects aligns with recommended methods for integrating employability skills training, promoting collaboration, peer learning, and preparation for real-world challenges. Industrial attachments provide students with essential hands-on experience, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The involvement of organisations in assessments adds depth to the evaluation, recognizing the significance of soft skills alongside technical competencies. Overall, these findings emphasise the need for a holistic approach in university education to enhance students' readiness for the dynamic and competitive job market.

6.1.4 What are the challenges that universities are facing in integrating employability skills training in their programmes?

The study identified several challenges in integrating employability skills into university programs, which hinder effective skill development for graduates. Key obstacles included faculty competencies, with a lack of educators who have both academic and industry experience necessary for practical skills training. There were also challenges in teaching practical skills, constrained by limited time and the often-rigid nature of course structures, which can conflict with hands-on learning. Furthermore, the absence of an organized approach to skill integration limits the development of practical abilities alongside academic content. Student attachments, such as internships, also face barriers, including difficulties in securing placements, managing volunteer work, and dealing with allowance and commuting issues. Finally, weak industry-university links prevent the seamless integration of industry-relevant skills, reducing the impact of training on work readiness.

The findings provided contextually specific evidence which might be taken into consideration when rethinking and designing policies and programmes aimed at improving graduate work readiness and labour force in general.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several key recommendations for practical, policy, and academic relevance were suggested:

6.2.1 Practical Recommendations for universities

- i. There is a need to develop and implement faculty training programs that expose lecturers to industrial and academic experiences. Furthermore, universities can establish partnerships with industry experts to provide regular workshops and updates for faculty members.
- ii. The study recommends establishing a well-structured system for integrating practical skills into the academic curriculum, ensuring a balance with theoretical content. There is need to allocate dedicated time within course outlines for hands-on experiences, practical assignments, and industry-related projects.
- iii. The study also recommends the need to establish a centralised system to assist students in finding attachment opportunities, securing accommodations, and managing logistical challenges. Universities can collaborate with industry partners to enhance the availability and diversity of attachment opportunities for students.
- iv. There is need to foster stronger connections between universities and industries through collaborative initiatives, joint projects, and industry advisory boards. In addition, mechanisms for ongoing communication and feedback between industry professionals and academic institutions should be established.

6.2.2 Policy Recommendations

- i. **Recruitment Policies for Educators:** For universities they can develop policies that prioritise the recruitment of lecturers with a blend of industrial and academic experience. In addition, there is need to implement mechanisms for continuous professional development to keep lecturers updated with industry trends.
- ii. **Mandatory Practical Components:** Implement policies that mandate a certain percentage of practical components in each academic program to ensure a balance with theoretical knowledge. Provide incentives for academic departments that successfully integrate practical elements into their courses.
- iii. **Standardised Assessment Criteria:** Develop standardised criteria for assessing students during internships and industrial attachments. Ensure that assessments focus not only on technical competencies but also on soft skills such as motivation, discipline, and teamwork.

6.2.3 Academic Relevance Recommendations

- i. **Holistic Employability Skills Curriculum:** The study recommends the need to develop a comprehensive curriculum that addresses a broad range of employability skills, including research, communication, computer literacy, emotional intelligence, and soft skills. Integrate employability skills throughout various courses to ensure a holistic development approach.
- ii. **Pedagogical Approaches:** There is need to find innovative ways of encouraging the use of diverse pedagogical approaches and promote peer teaching and collaborative learning to reinforce employability skills among students.
- iii. **Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation:** The study also recommend the need to implement a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation of employability skills integration in academic programs. This can be accompanied by regularly review and update curricula to align with evolving industry needs and technological advancements.
- iv. **Research and Innovation Centers:** There is need also to establish research and innovation centers within universities to facilitate collaboration between academia and industry.

These recommendations aim to address the identified challenges and enhance the integration of employability skills training into university programs, ultimately promoting the work readiness of graduates in Zambia.

6.3 Recommendations for further studies

Based on the findings, several recommendations for future studies can be proposed. Firstly, there is a need for more research to explore the effectiveness of specific interventions designed to enhance students' proficiency in employability skills. Furthermore, comparative studies across different universities or programs within Zambia could provide insights into the varying impacts of these interventions.

6.4 Chapter summary

Chapter six provides a comprehensive conclusion and offered recommendations for practical, policy, and academic relevance based on the findings of the study. The chapter has also provided several recommendations for research.

References

- Andrews, J., & Higson, H. (2008). Employability skills development in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Studies*, 12(3), 45-60.
- Aydoydo, T. (2018). Impact of social media on youth. *Social Media Studies*, 5(2), 78-89.
- Babbie, E. (2013). *The practice of social research* (13th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Baysal, A. (2015). Nutrition and health. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 20(1), 34-50.
- Borg, J., Turner, M., & Scott-Young, C. (2017). FOSTERING STUDENT WORK READINESS – A UNIVERSITY CASE STUDY.
- Brady, K. (2010). Leadership and organizational change. *Journal of Business Management*, 8(4), 102-118.
- Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(1), 31-44.
- Cavanagh, J., Burstone, M., & Southcombe, A. (2015). Effective teamwork in healthcare. *Health Services Management Research*, 28(3), 115-125.
- CBI/Universities UK. (2009). *Future Fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work*.
- Chickering, A. W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Clark, K. A. Selwood, and M. Muir. 2011. *Mapping Employability Tool Kit*. Accessed April 27, 2016. <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/mapping-employability-toolkit>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Curtis, D., & McKenzie, P. (2001). Employability skills for Australian industry. *National Centre for Vocational Education Research*, 15(2), 98-110.
- Daniels, J., & Brooker, J. (2014). Teaching and learning in higher education. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 26(2), 140-151.
- Dearing, R. (1997). *Higher Education in the Learning Society: Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education*. HMSO.
- De la Harpe, B., Radloff, A., & Wyber, J. (2000). Quality of education in universities. *Australian Journal of Education*, 44(3), 235-249.
- Drummond, D., & Rosenbluth, G. (2015). Economic policies and social justice. *Journal of Social Policy*, 44(4), 421-438.

- Farmer, T. a. (2002). Creative self-efficacy: its potential antecedents and relationship to creative performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45.
- Farooqui, J. F., & Gupta, R. (2022). Mapping Life Skills Education in Indian Schools: Instruction and Assessment. *EdTechReview*.
- Finch, D., Hamilton, L., Baldwin, R., & Zehner, A. (2012). An exploratory study of factors affecting undergraduate employability. *Education + Training*, 54(7), 578-596.
- Good, H. (2023). What is phenomenology in qualitative research? Retrieved July 06, 2023, from <https://dovetail.com/research/phenomenology-qualitative-research/>
- Goodwin, J. T., Goh, J., Verkoeyen, S., & Katherine, L. (2019). Can students be taught to articulate employability skills? *Education + Training*, 69(4). doi:10.1108/ET-08-2018-0186
- Hart Research Associates. (2013). It takes more than a major: Employer priorities for college learning and student success. Hart Research Associates Report.
- Hart, P. D. (2008). How should colleges assess and improve student learning?. AAC&U Publications.
- Hoque, N., Uddin, M., Ahmad, A., Mamun, A., Uddin, M. N., Chowdhury, R. A., & Noman Alam, A. H. M. (2023). The desired employability skills and work readiness of graduates: Evidence from the perspective of established and well-known employers of an emerging economy. *Industry and Higher Education*, 37(5), 716-730. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09504222221149850>
- Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. B. (2004). Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches (2nd ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- kachembele, m. (2014). *THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA AND IT CHALLENGES*.
- Kalanda, B. (2010). Community health initiatives in Africa. *African Journal of Health Sciences*, 17(1), 20-35.
- Kawalekar, K. (2017). Digital transformation in education. *Journal of Educational Technology*, 24(2), 99-110.
- Khera, R., & Khosla, S. (2012). Challenges in rural development. *International Journal of Rural Studies*, 19(3), 45-58.
- Kobus, A. (2011). Understanding quantitative research in education. *Educational Research Review*, 22(4), 270-285.
- Kothari, C. (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (2nd revised edition ed.). New Delhi: New Age International Publishers.

- Lairo, P., Puukari, S., & Kuovo, P. (2013). Cross-cultural counseling: Theory and practice. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60(2), 150-160.
- Lounsbury, J. W., Fisher, L. A., Levy, J. J., & Welsh, D. P. (2005). Personality traits and career satisfaction of human resource professionals. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 16(3), 233-248.
- Lowden, K., Hall, S., Elliott, D., & Lewin, J. (2011). Employers' perceptions of the employability skills of new graduates. Edge Foundation Report.
- Lusakatimes. (2021, April 28). Acquisition of life skills to be prioritised-PS. *Gneral News*.
- Mayer, J. D. (1992). Emotional intelligence as a predictor of success. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77(2), 313-321.
- Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2016). The ability model of emotional intelligence. *American Psychologist*, 71(6), 545-557.
- Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., Caruso, D. R., & Lopes, P. N. (2004). Emotional intelligence: Theory, findings, and implications. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(3), 197-215.
- McLeod, P. (2016). *SimplyPsychology*. Retrieved October 20, 2021, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html>
- Mohd, S., Ahmad, F., Mohd, R., & Aziz, A. (2013). Social media usage among university students. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 10(1), 25-36.
- Moono, M., & Rankin, N. (2013). Education and employment in Zambia. *Zambian Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(2), 89-105.
- Mulenga, D. (2015). Adult education and development in Zambia. *Zambian Educational Review*, 23(4), 120-135.
- Mwelwa, K. (2020). *EXPLORING SOCIAL SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAMMES' EFFECTIVENESS ON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN ZAMBIA*. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA.
- Nair, S., & Fahimirad, M. (2019). Online learning: Benefits and challenges. *Journal of Online Learning Research*, 18(1), 75-88.
- Nasheeda, A. K. (2019). A narrative systematic review of life skills education: effectiveness, research gaps and priorities. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 362-379.
- Nivedita, S., & Singh, R. (2016). Developing employability skills among graduates. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 38(3), 340-356.
- O'Banion, T. (2011). Focus on learning: A learning college reader. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 35(1), 1-10.

- Özdemir, S. (2015). Technology integration in education. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 14(2), 60-68.
- Pitman, T., & Broomhall, S. (2009). Australian higher education: Student satisfaction and performance. *Australian Journal of Education*, 53(3), 317-330.
- Prikshat, V., Montague, A., & Mishra, R. (2018). Graduate employability: A conceptual framework for reform. *International Journal of Management Education*, 16(2), 153-163.
- Prajapati, B., Sharma, H., & Sharma, D. (2017). 21st-century skills for employment. *International Journal of Education and Development*, 7(1), 23-34.
- Roselyne, P. (2014). Women empowerment through education. *Gender Studies Journal*, 10(2), 45-58.
- Salovey, P., Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Lopes, P. N. (2004). The role of emotional intelligence in leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 15(2), 237-254.
- Sandelowski, M. (1995). Sample size in qualitative research. *Res Nurs Health*, 18(2), 179-83. doi:10.1002/nur.4770180211
- Sandelowski, M. (1996). One is the liveliest number: the case orientation of qualitative research. *Res Nurs Health*, 19(6), 525-9.
- Scott, F.J., Connell, P., Thomson, L.A., & Willison, D. (2019). Empowering students by enhancing their employability skills. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(5), 692-707.
- Simona, G. (2015). *Teacher training for embedding life skills into vocational teaching*. Elsevier Ltd.
- Singh, R. (1994). The role of culture in education. *Journal of Cultural Education*, 22(1), 50-65.
- Sousa, M. (2018). *Entrepreneurship Skills Development in Higher Education Courses for Teams Leaders*. Portugal: MDPI.
- Sreeramana, A., Suresh, K., & Pavithra, K. (2015). Methods and Approaches for Employability Skill Generation in Higher Educational Institutions. Munich Personal RePEc Archive. Retrieved from <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/71995>
- Srinivas Rao A., Suresh Kumar P. M., & Aithal P. S., (2015), Strategic planning in higher education institutions - A case study of SIMS - VISION 2025, *International Journal of Educational Science and Research*; Vol.5 Issue 2, April 30, pp. 29-42. ISSN 2249-6947.
- Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., & Thorpe, S. e. (2018). Characterising and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: systematic analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period. *BMC Med Res Methodol*, 18(148). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7>
- WHO. (1993). Health and development: A global report. World Health Organization.

WHO, W. H. (2014). *Partners in Life skills education. Department of Mental Health World Health Organisation.* World Health Organisation, Department of Mental Health World Health Organisation. Geneva: World Health Organisation.

COMMENT

Appendices

Appendix I: Interviewer guide for school administrators

INTERVIEWER GUIDE FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Title of the study: Integration of Employability Skills Training in Selected University Degree Programmes for Graduate Work Readiness in Zambia

Background

The purpose of the study is to contribute to improved understanding of how employability skills are being integrated in university degree programmes for graduate school readiness.

Informed Consent

Dear participant, my name is Mpeza Mwamba, I am a student at the University of Zambia pursuing a Master of Education and Development as part of the requirements for the award of the Master's degree, I am conducting a research on 'Integration of Employability Skills Training in Selected University Degree Programmes for Graduate Work Readiness in Zambia'. I am therefore requesting your assistance in participating in this interview.

The information you are requested to give is for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality as no identity will be revealed. You are therefore requested not to write your name or indicate your identity.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Name of Investigator: Mpeza Mwamba

Phone number: 0973332528

Section A: Background information of participants

Date:	Age of Participant:
University:	Qualification:
Gender of Participant:	Years of service:
Interview Start time:	Interview end time:

Section B: Employability skills students have been exposed to in selected university programmes

1. What do you understand by the terms employability skills and graduate work readiness?
2. What programmes do you offer in this school and /or department?
3. In these programme, what employability skills do you think students taking these programmes should be exposed in order for them to be work ready?
4. What specific strategies or initiatives has the university implemented to enhance the employability skills of its graduates?
5. How does the university collaborate with industry partners or employers to ensure that the skills taught are aligned with workplace demands?
6. Are there any formal policies or guidelines in place for integrating employability skills training into degree programmes?
7. How does the university measure the effectiveness of employability skills training in improving graduate work readiness?
8. What challenges or obstacles have you encountered in integrating these skills into degree programs, and how have you addressed them?

Section C: How employability skills training in university programmes promotes work readiness among final-year students.

1. In your opinion, what do you think the university is doing well to prepare students for work? (focus on the values, skills & behaviours they are taught)

2. How is the integration of employability skills training in the university programmes promoting work readiness among student? (**Probe:** *What activities have been put in place to ensure this?*)
3. How important do you think employability skills are helping students to be ready for work?
4. What do you think the university can do better to prepare the students for work? (focus on the values, skills & behaviours they are taught)
5. What should the university, department, lecturers and the students do to promote student work readiness?

Section D: Challenges universities are facing in integrating employability skills training in their programmes.

1. What challenges do you face in integrating employability skills training in your programmes? (Probe: Any other challenge apart from the ones you have mentioned?)
2. In what ways can the integration of employability skills in university programmes be improved?

END-----

THANK YOU

Appendix II: Interviewer guide for lecturers

INTERVIEWE GUIDE FOR LECTURERS

Title of the study: Integration of Employability Skills Training in Selected University Degree Programmes for Graduate Work Readiness in Zambia

Background

The purpose of the study is to contribute to improved understanding of how employability skills are being integrated in university degree programmes for graduate school readiness.

Informed Consent

Dear participant, my name is Mpeza Mwamba, I am a student at the University of Zambia pursuing a Master of Education and Development. As part of the requirements for the award of the Master's degree, I am conducting a research on 'Integration of Employability Skills Training in Selected University Degree Programmes for Graduate Work Readiness in Zambia'. I am therefore requesting your assistance in participating in this interview.

The information you are requested to give is for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality as no identity will be revealed. You are therefore requested not to write your name or indicate your identity.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Name of Investigator: Mpeza Mwamba

Phone number: 0973332528

Section A: Background information of participants

Date:	Age of Participant:
-------	---------------------

University:	Qualification:
Gender of Participant:	Years of service:
Interview Start time:	Interview end time:
School:	Department:
	Course(s)

Section B: Employability skills students have been exposed to in selected university programmes

1. What do you understand by the terms employability skills and graduate work readiness?
2. Does the course you teach expose students to any employability skills training? (**Probe:** *What employability skills have your students been exposed to?*)
3. In this/these course(s), what skills do you think students taking this/these course(s) and programmes should be exposed in order for them to be work ready?
4. What employability skills do you think graduate students should be exposed to be work ready?

Section C: Approaches through which employability skills training is integrated into the selected university programmes.

1. Within the courses you teach, what are you doing to help prepare the students for their careers and be ready for work?
2. How do you incorporate employability skills (e.g., communication, problem-solving, teamwork) into your course(s) you teach? **Probe:** What approaches do you use to integrate employability skills training in the course(s) you teach?
3. Can you provide examples of specific assignments or projects that focus on developing these skills within your courses?
4. Can you give an example of an initiative or technique in your teaching that you believe helps in preparing the students for making the transition from university into the industry without difficulties? (focus on the values, skills & behaviours they are taught).
5. What resources or support do you receive from the university to help you integrate employability skills training into your courses?
6. How do you assess and evaluate students' progress in acquiring employability skills?

7. Are there any challenges you face when integrating employability skills into your courses, and how do you overcome them?
8. Have you observed any positive outcomes or improvements in students' work readiness as a result of this training?

Section D: How employability skills training in university programmes promotes work readiness among final-year students.

1. How important do you think employability skills are helping students to be ready for work?
2. How is integration of employability skills training in your programme/courses promoting work readiness among students?

Section E: Challenges universities are facing in integrating employability skills training in their programmes.

3. What challenges do you face in integrating employability skills training in your course(s)? (Probe: Any other challenge apart from the ones you have mentioned?)
4. In what ways can the integration of employability skills in your course(s) be improved?
5. In what ways can the integration of employability skills in university programmes be improved?

END-----

THANK YOU

Appendix III: Questionnaire for students

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Title of the study: Integration of Employability Skills Training in Selected University Degree Programmes for Graduate Work Readiness in Zambia

Background

The purpose of the study is to contribute to improved understanding of how employability skills are being integrated in university degree programmes for graduate school readiness.

Informed Consent

Dear participant, my name is Mpeza Mwamba, I am a student at the University of Zambia pursuing a Master of Education and Development As part of the requirements for the award of the Master's degree, I am conducting a research on 'Integration of Employability Skills Training in Selected University Degree Programmes for Graduate Work Readiness in Zambia'. I am therefore requesting your assistance in participating in this interview.

The information you are requested to give is for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality as no identity will be revealed. You are therefore requested not to write your name or indicate your identity.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Name of Investigator: Mpeza Mwamba

Phone number: 0973332528

Section A: Background information of participants

Q1. Sex of respondent?

- 1. Male []
- 2. Female []

Q2. What is your age bracket?

- 1. Less than 20 years []
- 2. 20-24 years []
- 3. 25-29 years []
- 4. 30-34 years []
- 5. 35-39 years []
- 6. 40 years and above []

Q3. Please indicate your programme of study

Section B: Students' proficiency in employability skills essential for graduate work readiness.

Q4. Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements. In a workplace employability skill are more important than specialist knowledge. Please tick the appropriate box

- 1. Strongly Disagree []
- 2. Disagree []
- 3. Undecided []
- 4. Agree []
- 5. Strongly Agree []

Q5. From a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel to take on a job.

- 0. Not at all confident []
- 1. Slightly confident e []
- 2. Moderately confident []
- 3. Very confident []
- 4. Extremely confident []

Q7. Rate your level of competence on each of the following employability skills?

No.	Employability skills	(3) Very competent	(2) Moderately competent	(1) Slightly competent	(0) Not at all competent
1.	Analytical ability				
2.	Communication				
3.	Coping with multiple tasks				
4.	Creativity/Innovative				
5.	Critical thinking customer focused				
6.	Decision-making				
7.	Entrepreneurial skills				
8.	Information Communication Technology				
9.	Interpersonal skills				
10.	Leadership				
11.	Presentation skills				
12.	Problem-solving				
13.	Research skills				
14.	Team work				
15.	Time management				

Section C: Approaches through which life skills training is integrated into the selected university programmes.

Q8. Within the courses you are taking, have you had opportunities for the following:

No.	Activity	Yes	No
1.	Mentorship and Guidance		
2.	Career Workshops		
3.	Guest Speakers		
4.	Internship Placement		
5.	Professional Development Courses		
6.	Industry-Specific Projects		
7.	Networking Events		
8.	Mock Interviews		
9.	Career Counselling		
10.	Research Opportunities		
11.	Professional Organizations		
12.	Job Postings		
13.	Soft Skills Workshops		
14.	Career Advising Resources		
15.	Alumni Connections		

Q9. How best do you think students can be exposed to employability

skills?.....

Appendix IV: Interviewer guide for labour/higher education officials

INTERVIEWE GUIDE

Title of the study: Integration of Employability Skills Training in Selected University Degree Programmes for Graduate Work Readiness in Zambia

Background

The purpose of the study is to contribute to improved understanding of how employability skills are being integrated in university degree programmes for graduate school readiness.

Informed Consent

Dear participant, my name is Mpeza Mwamba, I am a student at the University of Zambia pursuing a Master of Education and Development as part of the requirements for the award of the Master's degree, I am conducting a research on 'Integration of Employability Skills Training in Selected University Degree Programmes for Graduate Work Readiness in Zambia'. I am therefore requesting your assistance in participating in this interview.

The information you are requested to give is for academic purposes only and will be treated with utmost confidentiality as no identity will be revealed. You are therefore requested not to write your name or indicate your identity.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Name of Investigator: Mpeza Mwamba

Phone number: 0973332528

Section A: Background information of participants

Date:	Age of Participant:
Position:	Qualification:
Gender of Participant:	Years of service:
Interview Start time:	Interview end time:

Section B: Employability skills students should be exposed to in university programmes

1. What do you understand by the terms employability skills and graduate work readiness?
2. Can you provide an overview of the university's policies and approaches regarding the integration of employability skills training into degree programs?
3. What are the key employability skills prioritized by universities, and how do they ensure these skills are integrated into the curriculum?
4. How do you collaborate with universities to ensure that the employability skills taught are aligned with workplace demands?
5. What formal policies or guidelines are in place to help university integrate employability skills training into degree programmes?
6. How do universities collaborate with local employers or industry partners to ensure that the training provided aligns with current industry needs?
7. Are there any mechanisms in place for universities to receive feedback from employers about the readiness of graduates in terms of employability skills?

Section C: How employability skills training in university programmes promotes work readiness among final-year students.

1. How important do you think employability skills are helping students to be ready for work?
2. Can you share any success stories or best practices related to employability skills integration at universities?
3. From your perspective, have you observed any improvements in the work readiness of graduates as a result of employability skills training in these degree programs?

4. What do you think the university can do better to prepare the students for work? (focus on the values, skills & behaviours they are taught)
5. What should the university, department, lecturers and the students do to promote student work readiness?
6. In your opinion, what recommendations do you have for universities to further enhance the integration of employability skills training for their students?
7. How can labour departments or relevant agencies better support universities in their efforts to prepare graduates for the job market?

END-----

THANK YOU