

# **Effect of Career Orientation Types on Employability Skills of Selected Graduates of Three Universities of Economics**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the graduates' transition to employment of graduates attended at three universities of economics during Academic Years from 2010-2011 to 2015-2016. It focused to identify types of career orientation and employability skills perceived by them and to analyze how their career orientation types can affect their employability skills after their graduation.

The study used following statistical tools: Frequency and Descriptive Analysis, Tests of Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Leven, Independent Samples, Welsh, and Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

The study found that hesitation type of career orientation of graduates had highly employability skills constructed attitudes and valued their social network, friendship, general knowledge and experience through taking part in social network, sports, and art activities. Another finding was that if graduates had the higher perception of hesitation career orientation type in them, their personal and core skills of employability would be relatively higher.

**Keywords:** Graduates, Employment, Career Orientation Type, Employability Skill

## I. INTRODUCTION

The new changes to the knowledge based economy have caused the expectations of the employers to be different and distant from those of the employees. For there to be no big gaps between the expectations of the employers and those of the employees, graduates, employers, universities with the higher education, government and non-government communities are required to collaborate and support the countries' social, economic sector and education sector by overcoming any challenges and threats.

Employability means the development of skills and adaptable workforces in which all those capable of work are encouraged to develop the skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives [1]. But some graduates do not know how to utilize

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their knowledge and skills, or how to acquire the needed skills for success in their workplace. Consequently, there are expectation gaps between the employers and the employees, educators and employers need to work together to prepare students for the complexities they will encounter as they leave school and enter the work place [2].

Employability is centered on the assumed transposition of skills and competences from the educational context into the workplace. This has challenged the relatively neat fit between the types of knowledge and skills acquired through higher education and its overall utility and transferability in jobs. By placing heavy emphasis on the rather mechanistic link between skills acquired in an educational context and its deployment in the job, the skills approach tends to downplay the way in which graduates become realized as skilled, employable workers [3].

There are three elements mainly to be investigated in the transition process of graduates towards employment. They are four types of career orientations before graduation, their employability after graduation and their work identity after getting employed in order to examine whether those graduates were treated effectively and obtained the required academic knowledge and other employability skills which are basic necessities demanded by employers in labor market or not and, last but not least, the way they believed in themselves as professionals and are proud of being graduates of their university while taking their responsibility at the workplaces currently [4].

The employability of graduates has become an aim that governments around the world have, to varying extents, imposed on national higher education systems. This interest in employability reflects an acceptance of human capital theory [5]. Under human capital theory, the task of a government is to foster conditions that encourage growth in the stock of human capital, since this is seen as vital to the performance of knowledge-based economies in a globalized society. There are two important sources for knowledge growth in this society; one is the learning-by-doing that takes place in innovative workplaces and the other one is the higher education system [6].

The higher education system is subject to governmental steer in giving an emphasis to the enhancement of the employability of new graduates. Employers in the UK tended to value generic skills more highly than disciplinary-based understanding and skills. For some employers (the computer industry and social work provide two

contrasting examples, disciplinary knowledge and understanding are vital. [7] This is consistent with the views of Reich who argued that advanced economies need two sorts of high-level expertise: emphasizing discovery on the one hand, and focusing on exploiting the discoveries of others through market-related intelligence and the application of interpersonal skills on the other. Reich suggested a kind of professionals whom labor markets want to employ suited for in the knowledge-based economies, symbolic analysts, those who are imaginative and creative, have at their fingertips relevant disciplinary understanding and skills and the “soft” or generic skills that enable the disciplinary base to be deployed to optimal effect. Higher education’s key contribution to national prosperity lies in development of graduates with such achievement at their disposal. This means that undergraduate programmes should be concerned with four areas in particular: (1) abstraction (theorizing and /or relating empirical data to theory, and /or using formulae, equations, models and metaphors); (2) system thinking (seeing the part in the context of the wider whole); (3) experimentation (intuitively or analytically); and (4) collaboration (involving communication and team-working skills). Actually, educational institutions are not always successful in preparing learners for the complexity inherent in the two main sorts of activity that Reich attributes to symbolic analysts’ role [8].

Learners are often expected to learn what is put in front of them and to work individually and competitively, and subject matter may be compartmentalized. Plainly, the education of symbolic analysts – who are likely to be those at the leading edge of economic developments of one kind or another – requires that institutions make a particular effort to foster the achievements that Reich highlighted. Higher education is, however, not only about the education of symbolic analysts. There are other ways in which it can contribute to economic development. As well as preparing graduates and diplomats for employment-related roles of various kinds (and definitely not only that of the symbolic analyst), it has an acknowledged role in lifelong learning – for example, in further educating the middle manager so that he or she can manage more effectively, in “up skilling” the teacher or process worker, facilitating the development of active citizenship, and so on [9].

Any university is an important entity that generates the specific competencies needed for successful entry into the labor market, better employability and active citizenship for their university graduates and tested that how these competences were

related to characteristics of jobs and firms, to what extent higher education graduates possess these competences, and to what extent higher education institutions provides these competences [10].

Myanmar's economy growth has led to the appearance of new local businesses and has affected businesses of all sizes. The government opens the policies and regulations that have led to an influx of international businesses and foreign investment. Therefore, lots of new jobs for educated youths are created. Some youths may be able to get jobs in their fields of study. There may be challenges for some young people to match their studies in university with job because of the more competition for a specific job, lack the necessary skills needed and/or demand higher salaries than employers are willing to provide, etc. Under these current labor market circumstances in Myanmar, the transition of graduates of the three Universities of Economics in Myanmar to employment after their graduation was worth studying to find out their types of career motivation before graduation, perception of their employability and competencies that related to the current job and working fields and their work identity on balancing job characteristics and employability skills. To be specific and effective, it could be proved that the types of career orientation and employability skills of the graduates would be different significantly due to the difference between two groups of graduates those who were enrolled by different university entrance (matriculation examination) marks, those who attended 3-year or 4-year schooling time in their university of economics and those who learnt the courses the old or new enhanced curriculum.

## **II. Background, Scope and Methods**

### **A. Background of the Study**

There are 192 higher education institutions in Myanmar. Among them, there are only three Universities of Economics in Myanmar, namely Yangon University of Economics (YUEco) which was established since 1962 in Yangon Division, Monywa University of Economics (MUEco) which was opened in 1996 at Sagaing Division, and Meikhtilar University of Economics (MEUEco) which was launched in 1999 at Meikhtilar in Mandalay Division.

Annually, each university of economics admits the specific numbers of students those who apply for specific university and specialization degrees based their location in specific regions and matriculation examination marks above or on par with

the minimum university entrance marks imposed by each university of economics. The number of students admitted and enrolled in each university and the specification score of minimum university entrance marks prescribed by each university are different from each other among those three universities of economics based on their location of university, capacities of administrative and academic system of each university and the preferences of students-parents in choosing and applying for which university of economics as graduates to get early jobs as soon as possible after graduation.

### **B. Scope of the Study**

This study only focuses the total number of graduates (2,119) offered in 2010-2011 those were outputs of number of students (2,838) those who were enrolled by each of three universities of economics in 2008-2009. In 2011-2012, total number of graduates (3,511) those were out of number of students (4,292) those who were admitted by each of three universities of economics in 2009-2010. Similarly, total number of graduates (3,467) conferred in 2012-2013 those were outputs of number of students (4,037) those who were attended by each of three universities of economics in 2010-2011.

On the other hand, the total number of students (4,485) those who were enrolled in 2011-2012 in each university of the study were attended as third year students at their respective degree specialized programs and number of graduates (4,815) those were outputs of majority of (4,485) students enrolled in 2011-2012, were graduated in 2014-2015 after attending 4-year degree programs offered in each of three universities of economics. In a similar way, there were number of graduates (3,408) in 2015-2016 those were outputs of number of students (3,061) enrolled in 2012-2013 in the each of three universities of economics in the study.

Based on the information mentioned above, the responded graduates as population in the study could be divided into two groups in which the first group involved the graduates those who graduated between 2010-2011 and 2012-2013, those who completed their learning within three-year schooling time and old curriculum system with learning design in all universities. Another study group consisted of the graduates those who completed between 2013-2014 and 2015-2016, those who were treated and trained by the new upgraded curriculum and degree

courses designed within length of schooling time four-year to get their respective degrees.

Table (1) presents these two types of graduates classified by their different university entrance minimum marks by academic year, difference between attending three years and four years schooling time length, and different treatment of old curriculum system and degree courses designed and upgrading new curriculum system and degree courses designed in each university of economics.

Table (1) Number of Graduates into Grouping Classified by Three Universities of Economics

Particulars	Graduates Offered in 2010-11 and 2012-13 (Group I)	Graduates Offered in 2013-14 and 2015-16 (Group II)	Total Number of Graduates
YUEco	6,675	5,116	11,791
MUEco	1,495	1,560	3,055
MEUEco	927	1,547	2474
Total	9,097	8,223	17,320

Source: Survey Data (2017)

### C. Sampling and Sample Units of the Study

The sampling method of the study is simple random sampling. By conducting by this sampling method, the numbers of respondents of graduates from each group were selected. The number of selected respondents from Group I by each university of economics and they are graduated offered during in 2010-2011 to 2012-2013. Moreover, all selected respondents of the study from Group I were currently working at the respective field after graduation. Therefore, total sample units of working graduates from Group I were (650) out of population (9,097) graduates finished in the academic years of 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 by three universities of economics according to the following Sample Size Formula. In terms of the numbers that selected from population, the sample size  $n$  is given by  $n = \frac{Nx}{(N-1)E^2+x}$ ; where  $x = Z(\frac{c}{100})^2 r (100 - r)N$  is the population size,  $r$  is the fraction of responses and  $Z(c/100)$  is critical value for the confidence level  $c$ . The margin of error ( $E$ ) is given by  $E = \sqrt{(N - n)x/n(N - 1)}$ . The required sample size is calculated by using sample size calculator in raosoft.inc to get the minimum recommended size of this study.

The number of selected respondents from Group II by each university of economics and they were graduated offered during in 2014-2015 to 2015-2016. Moreover, all selected respondents of the study from Group II were currently working at the respective field after their graduation. The total sample units of working graduates from Group II were (620) out of population (8,223) graduates finished in the academic years of 2014-2015 to 2015-2016 by three universities of economics according to the following Sample Size Formula. In terms of the numbers that selected from population, the sample size  $n$  is given by  $n = \frac{Nx}{(N-1)E^2+x}$ ; where  $x = Z(\frac{c}{100})^2 r (100 - r)$   $N$  is the population size,  $r$  is the fraction of responses and  $Z(c/100)$  is critical value for the confidence level  $c$ . The margin of error ( $E$ ) is given by  $E = \sqrt{(N - n)x/n(N - 1)}$ . The required sample size is calculated by using sample size calculator in raosoft.inc to get the minimum recommended size of this study.

#### **D. Research Methods of the Study**

In order to fulfill the research objectives and prove the postulated research hypotheses, structured questionnaire has been designed especially for this study and contains three parts. Part (1) identified the types of career orientation of respondents and part (2) examined employability skills perceived by each respondent graduate, and part (3) analyzed the effect of career orientation types of each selected graduate on their employability skills perceived by themselves. Five point Likert-style rating (“strongly disagree =1”, “disagree = 2”, “Neither agree nor Disagree = 3”, “Agree = 4” to 5 “strongly agree”) method of questionnaires was employed for three constructs of independent variables, four types of career orientation: Orientated toward Introspection, Orientated toward Hesitation, Orientated toward Learning, and Orientated toward Instrumentalism and three dependent variables of employability skills: core, process, and personal perceived by each respondent. The Likert-Scale rating method of questionnaire design enables to ask respondents on how strongly they agree or disagree with statement or series of statement. The advantage of the Likert-Scale rating questionnaire is that it enables numerical value to be assigned to case for easy quantitative analysis. The questionnaire was pretested to check its content validity and modified accordingly by pilot test. The pilot sample has been exempted from the study sample.

As a sampling method, simple random sampling (SRS) was employed in this research. The required sample sizes are calculated by using sample size calculator in raosoft.inc to get the minimum recommended size of this study. After calculation the sample size with 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level, 650 out of 9097 graduates finished in the academic years of 2010-2011 to 2012-2013 and 620 out of population 8223 graduates finished in the academic years of 2014-2015 to 2015-2016 by three universities of economics are set up as study sample. In the process of sampling, 1270 questionnaire are distributed to each selected graduated from 2010-2011 to 2015-2016 academic years in YUEco, MUEco, and MEUEco, now all of them are working at the respective working environment.

By way of a data collection method, face-to-face interview with the respondents and self-administrate survey that are distributed by hand delivery or online are mainly use to collect the data. Therefore, combination of the data collection method is used in this research. Enough time given to sampled respondents to fill the questionnaires to reduce sampling error. The questionnaires have been collected within four month with a response rate of (100) %.

After receiving the raw data from 1270 respondents, the next step was to input the data in software to carry out the data processing. The data is processed via SPSS version 22. The purpose is to ensure the data are in the standard of quality. The process includes checking, editing, coding and transcribing. Initially, check and review each questionnaire to verify its completeness and incomplete questionnaire will be discarded. No amendment is required as there is no missing data. And then coding process is made by identifying and assigning numerical scores to make calculation and descriptive analysis. For this paper, for the gender of respondents in Section A, male has been coded as “1” while female as “2”. Lastly, the data are entered and transformed into a more suitable format for data analysis.

For data analysis, the frequency distribution table and multiple composite bar char, applied for the presentation on findings. Descriptive method is applied. 5 point Likert Scales Scale is used to get average score of each source. This study used data analysis both qualitative and quantitative data analysis method. The study utilized the following statistical tools:

1. Frequency and Descriptive Analysis

2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test -to check if the data is distributed normal
3. Leven's test -to use homogeneity (the variances in the two groups must be similar)
4. Independent Samples t Test procedure - to test if there is a difference in a measured characteristic between two population (assumption of homogeneity is met)
5. Welsh's test procedure - to test if there is a difference in a measured characteristic between two population (assumption of homogeneity is not met and skewness values are both same sign)
6. Pearson Correlation Coefficient- to describe the extent to which two variables covey and the direction can be quantified mathematically.

The secondary data used in the study were collected in the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Departments of Academic Affair of YUEco, MUEco, and MEUEco during mid in 2017.

### **III. Analytical Framework of the Study**

The study mainly focus to examine the employability of working graduates those attended in YUEco, MUEco and MEUEco, how they perceived their employability skills whether they get required skills and knowledge through attending university or learning by doing at specific workplaces after graduation. Moreover their employability skills could be related to their types of career orientation before graduation. Based on the literature review and empirical studies of employment, employability skills and career orientation types of graduates, the working definitions of main key terms of the study were determined to investigate firstly the demographical data, employability status after the graduation and their specific roles, functions and earning by working at their firms. Afterwards, their employability level and career orientation types perceived by selected graduates were identified and then their relationship between each of employability skills learnt in university and each type of career orientation they perceived by themselves were investigated through testing the proposed three hypotheses to support the main objective of the study.

### **IV. Testing Hypotheses of the Study**

The hypothesis was tested to prove *the higher the career orientation type before graduation perceived by selected graduates attended in YUEco, MUEco and YEUEco,*

*the higher overall level of perception of their employability skills in the study.*” The purpose of this analysis is aim to look at the each carrier orientation and its relationship with three type of employability skills. Pearson correlation's coefficient will indicate the direction, strength and significant of the bivariate relationships among all the variables that were measured at an interval or ration level. The rule of thumb about the coefficient range and the strength of the relationship are shown as in following Table (2).

Table (2): Rules of Thumb about Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Coefficient Range	Strength of Relationship
±0.91 to ±1.00	Very Strong
±0.71 to ±0.90	High
±0.41 to ±0.70	Moderate
±0.21 to ±0.40	Small but definite relationship
±0.01 to ±0.20	Slight, almost negligible

Source: Survey Data (2017)

The resulted P value (0.00) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the introspection carrier orientation and personal skill is significant at 1% level of significance.

Table (2): Analysis on Relationship between Introspection Carrier Orientation and Employability Skills

Variables	Correlation Coefficients	Strength of Relationship
Introspection Vs Personal Skill	.328**	Small but definite relationship
Introspection Vs Core Skill	.316**	Small but definite relationship
Introspection Vs Process Skill	.283**	Small but definite relationship

Note \*\*.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Moreover, there is inversely and weakly but definite relationship between introspection carrier orientation and core skill. The relationship between introspection carrier orientation and core skill is a significant at 1% level because the resulted p value is 0.000 that is less than alpha value 0.01. And, there is small but definite and inverse relationship between introspection carrier orientation and process skill. The resulted P value (.000) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the introspection carrier orientation and process skill is insignificant at 1% level of significance. From this analysis of relationship between introspection career orientation and employability skills of personal, core and process

skills were inversely related to each other. It could be seen that the type of the graduates who perceived themselves as introspection of career orientation during attending the university has lower perception of their personal, core and process skills required for employability. The higher the perception level of introspection career orientation of the graduates, the lower their employability skills of personal, core and process of all respondents in the study. Since all responded graduates from Group I and Group II disagreed that all of them were not the type of introspection career orientation type of students while attending university. In conclusion, all studied graduates attended and graduated in three universities of economics could not be assumed as introspection career orientation type having perception of being difficult and worried to pass the exam regularly and who originally has lower perception level on their employability skills especially in process skills such as skills in problem solving, teamwork, communication, critical thinking strategically and creativity that were required to apply in their respective workplaces currently. Table (3) presents the analysis of relationship between hesitation career orientation types and each skill of employability.

Table (3): Analysis on Relationship between Hesitation Career Orientation and Employability Skills

Variables	Correlation Coefficients	Strength of Relationship
Hesitation Vs Personal Skill	.828**	High
Hesitation Vs Core Skill	.816**	High
Hesitation Vs Process Skill	.683**	Moderate

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Through studying from Table (3) shown above the relationship between hesitation career orientation and three types of the skills of employability, there is positively and highly relationship between hesitation carrier orientation and personal skill. The resulted P value (0.00) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the hesitation carrier orientation and personal skill is significant at 1% level of significance. Moreover, there is highly and directly direct relationship between hesitation carrier orientation and core skill. The resulted P value (0.00) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the hesitation carrier orientation and core skill is significant at 1% level of significance. There is moderately and directly relationship between hesitation carrier orientation and process skill. The resulted P value (0.00) is

more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the hesitation carrier orientation and process skill is significant at 1% level of significance.

It could be seen that the type of the graduates who perceived themselves as hesitation of career orientation during attending the university has high attitude and value their social network, friendship, general knowledge and experience through taking part in social network, sports, art activities and study trip and touring with friends but they have never been absent to attend to a class. Therefore it could be concluded that if the graduates had the higher the perception of hesitation career orientation type in them, the personal and core skills of all respondents would be relatively higher positively in the study. Nevertheless the relationship between hesitation career orientation type of students and their process skills were moderately related to each other because the main characteristics of process skills could be obtained normally by learning in a class and doing at workplace.

Continuously following Table (4) presents the findings through analysis on relationship between learning carrier orientation and employability. By analyzing that how the perception of learning oriented students while attending the university could be related to his employability skills of personal, core and process that required to apply them in their job currently after graduation.

Table (4): Analysis on Relationship between Learning Carrier Orientation and Employability Skills

Variables	Correlation Coefficients	Strength of Relationship
Learning Vs Personal Skill	.624**	Moderate
Learning Vs Core Skill	.827**	High
Learning Vs Process Skill	.924**	Very Strong

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

According to the findings of the above Table, there is moderately and directly related to learning carrier orientation and personal skill of each graduate. The resulted P value (0.00) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the learning carrier orientation and personal skill is significant at 1% level of significance. Moreover, there is highly and directly relationship between learning carrier orientation and core skill. The resulted P value (0.00) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation

coefficient between the learning carrier orientation and core skill is significant at 1% level of significance. There is very strongly and directly relationship between learning carrier orientation and process skill. The resulted P value (0.00) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the learning carrier orientation and process skill is significant at 1% level of significance.

It could be seen that the type of the graduates who perceived themselves as learning career orientation during attending the university has highly value, belief, and attitude in learning as well as education. That kind of learning oriented students were strongly confident in education and knowledge gained through from learning in a class to work and participate in knowledge based services industry.

Table (5) presents the investigation of whether the respondents having higher perception of instrumentalism carrier orientation type before the graduation had higher skills of personal, core and process of employability perceived themselves relatively.

The resulted P value (0.00) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the instrumentalism carrier orientation and personal skill is significant at 1% level of significance.

Table (5): Analysis on Relationship between Instrumentalism Carrier Orientation and Employability Skills

Variables	Correlation Coefficients	Strength of Relationship
Instrumentalism Vs Personal Skill	.252**	Small but definite relationship
Instrumentalism Vs Core Skill	.407**	Moderate
Instrumentalism Vs Process Skill	.519**	Moderate

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Moreover, there is moderate and direct relationship between instrumentalism carrier orientation and core skill. The resulted P value (0.00) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the instrumentalism carrier orientation and core skill is significant at 1% level of significance. There is moderate and direct relationship between instrumentalism carrier orientation and process skill. The resulted P value (0.00) is more than  $\alpha=0.01$  (1% level of significant). This means that correlation coefficient between the instrumentalism

carrier orientation and process skill is significant at 1% level of significance. All findings supported to prove the proposed hypothesis H4.

## V. CONCLUSION

The issues and challenges occurred in the platform of graduates transition towards employment after graduation were one of the emerging socio-economical and employment issues to be resolved urgently for all stakeholders of higher education institutions, employers, employment agencies in labor markets and parents and graduates themselves in both developed and developing countries. If those responsible entities and personnel involved in concerning graduates unemployment and underemployment looked into the problem immediately in every kind of labor markets in all countries, they would know the reasons why it appears in labor market and can find out the alternative ways of solution in getting jobs in shorter waiting time for fresher graduates equipped with diversity of specific knowledge and skills acquired in attending universities through investing that platform of graduate transition to employment and, consequently, issues and challenges occurred during this period for each graduate, since the knowledge based business enterprises and organizations could be produced as a result of productivity improvement, efficient usage of resources and effective management and administrative ways led by the self-disciplined and skilled young educated human capitals of any country.

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