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Factors Impact Business Graduates Employability: Evidence from Academicians and Employers in Kuwait

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore the importance that academicians and employers attach to factors impact business graduates employability in Kuwait. Four categories of employability factors were used in the current study covering graduates knowledge, soft skills, personal abilities and working with groups. A questionnaire that contained these factors was distributed to academicians as well as employers and they were asked to express the level of importance they assign to variables within each of these categories. The results of the analyses pointed to differences in the levels of importance academicians and employers attach to employability factors covered in the questionnaire, indicating that current programs offered by business schools in Kuwait are not responding to market needs. While employers attach high levels of importance to graduates knowledge, soft skills and personal abilities, academicians do not assign the same levels of importance to these factors. However, academicians and employers appeared to be consistent in the level of importance they attach to the working within group factor. Business schools are requested to develop their academic programs in order to respond to market's needs. This requires changes in the contents of these programs (input) together with teaching instruments in order to improve output and satisfy employers demand.

Keywords: Higher education, Business graduates, Competencies, Skills, Kuwait

Introduction

The last two decades witnessed a significant increase in the number of universities in the Arab Gulf region in general, and in Kuwait in particular. The main feature of all these universities is that almost all of them have business schools that account for a significant proportion of their activities[1]. This results in an increasing number of business graduates. In return, the size of the Kuwaiti market is relatively small and offers limited number of jobs opportunities. The imbalance between the supply of business graduates and the number of job vacancies in the market workforce would motivate universities to develop the contents of their academic programs and methods of teaching to equip their graduates with knowledge and skills necessary to enhance their employability. As a consequence, the relationship between knowledge and skills possessed by business graduates and job market has been the subject of intensive empirical research. Empirical research attempts to identify the most important factors that business graduates need to possess to enhance their employability.

The main objective of this study is to determine the levels of importance that employers and academicians attach to employability factors that business graduates in Kuwait are expected to possess. This will assist in identifying possible differences between employers and academicians and this would assist policy makers at the country level together with policy makers at the university level to formulate their education strategies in a way that satisfies market demand. This is expected to enhancebusiness graduates employability, reduce levels of unemployment and ensure economic and social growth.

Thus, the outcome of this study would be useful for students, academic institutions, researchers and employers. The outcome of the study would assist studentsinchoosing the academic institution that satisfies job market's needs. Academicinstitutions would use the outcome of this study in developing the input of their future academic programs, teaching methods and proficiency of their lecturers to take into account job-market needs. The outcome of this study would also stimulate academic research to look into new creative teaching trends that help graduates in acquiring career development skills. Moreover, employers would benefit from this study in identifying the gap between academic institutions output and what they expect from business graduates. This would assist employers in arranging necessary training programs to fill the gap. Finally, the outcome of this study is expected to add a new dimension to the literature and contribute to the limited body of empirical studies about employers' perceptions towards the quality of business graduates undertaken in emerging economies.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: The following section offers a review to previous related studies. A brief description of data collection and study methodology are presented in section 3. While the findings are discussed in section 4, the conclusion is offered in the final section.

Previous related studies

[1]The following academic institutions were established in Kuwait and offer either diploma or Bachelor/ Masters degrees in business studies: Alqonquin College (2010), American College of Middle East (2005), American University of Kuwait (2003), American University of Middle East (2005), Arab Open University (2003), Australian College of Kuwait (2003), Box Hill College-Kuwait (2004), British College of Kuwait (2010), Community College in Kuwait (2011), Gulf University for Science and Technology (2002), Kuwait Maastricht Business School (2003), Kuwait Technical College (2005), Management University College of Kuwait (2012).

Employability means the suitability of graduates' knowledge together with their personal abilities and skills to the changing needs of the marketplace. Hence, employability is a changing concept. It varies over time and across economic sectorsand across countries. In other words, employability requirements for the services sector is different that employability in the manufacturing sector. Weligamage (2009) further found that employer expectation and requirement differ according to different countries. He suggested that the needs of the employers and skills of learners should be taken into account in formulating future skills assessments. He recommended that universities should identify skill sets that will best serve the future labor market and align programs to meet those needs.

Yorke (2004) viewed employability as a set of achievements, skills and personal attributes that help graduates to obtain employment and retain their jobs. In this respect, Lowden, Hall, Elliot and Lewin (2011) believe that employers expect graduates to possess personal attributes and skills such as team-work, communication, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and managerial abilities. McCabe (2010) contends that jobs are not guaranteed to graduates unless they successfully use their personal attributes and skills in their job. It is important to mention that hard skills including knowledge and personal attributes are necessary to obtain a job but not necessarily sufficient to retain it. Soft skills would help graduates in progressing and retaining their jobs. Hence, universities usually work side by side with the educational authorities to develop and adopt strategies that equip graduates with necessary knowledge and skills that satisfy the job market demand. Yet, due to the changeable nature of the market needs, some employers are not yet fully satisfied with the knowledge and skills possessed by universities graduates. Consequently, the gap between universities output and the job market demand has been subjected to intensive empirical research. Graham (2001) investigated knowledge, skills, and abilities employers expect graduates to possess and found that graduates need to demonstrate the ability to work within groups, show leadership, dedication, and initiation more than what they are doing now. He further found that employers attach high importance to verbal expression, presentation skills, listening, and understanding instructions. Hodges and Burchell (2003) explored employers' views of about how well business graduates are prepared for the workplace. They established that employers look for graduates' soft skills, and their ability to deal empathetically and effectively with job demand. They stressed that employers believe that graduates have unrealistic expectations about business world and lack interpersonal skills. Hodges and Burchell suggested cooperative education programs to assist students in understanding that the workplace is a place where they must take responsibility for identifying their own learning needs and do something about them. In a similar line of research, Weligamage and Siengthai (2003) looked into employers' needs from university graduates and found university graduates' lack key skills sought by employers. They also reported that universities do equip their graduates with the required labor skills and undergraduates' lack knowledge about the reality of the workplace. Weligamage and Siengthai (2003) concluded that mismatch between graduate skills and what workplace sought results in an in increase in the levels of unemployment among graduates.

Branine (2008) investigated changes in the procedures of graduate recruitment and selection that have been used by UK employers. He found that, irrespective of their organizations size or type of activity, employerstend to use more sophisticated and cost-effective recruitment and selection procedures than before. Branine revealed that the process of graduate recruitment and selection is becoming more person-related than job-oriented since many

employers are more interested in the attitudes, personality and transferable skills of applicants than the type or level of qualification acquired.

In a related line of research, Robinson and Garton (2008) tried to identify skills to improve university's curriculum and found that employers assign high levels of importance to problems solving, effective communicating, team work, critical thinking and interpersonal skills. Robinson and Garton advised universities to organize workshops/trainings programs to assist faculty members in incorporating strategies that address deficiencies in the learning outcomes of their academic programs.

Andrews and Higson (2008) explored employer perspectives of business graduate employability in four European countries (UK, Austria, Slovenia and Romania). They noticed similarities in employer perspectives of what may be termed '*core components*' of business graduate employability. The core components include the need for prior work-experience, the value of hard business-related knowledge and skills and the importance of soft business-related skills and competencies. Saunders and Zuzel (2010) added that employers ranked personal qualities very highly. They also found that employers ranked a number of the personal attributes and core skills more highly than technical and subject–specific skills. Saunders and Zuzel believe that employers attach high importance to technical competence than they attach to certain personal skills. Blom and Saeki (2011) searched employability and skill set of new graduates and they found that employers hiring fresh graduates are somewhat satisfied with the quality of the new hires. They found that employers perceive soft skills such as core employability skills and communication skills to be very important. They suggest that engineering education institutions should seek to improve the skill set of graduates; recognize the importance of soft skills and interact more with employers to understand the particular demand for skills in that region and sector.

Singh and Singh (2008) studied employers' perception about employability skills needed by job market. They found employers prefer to hire graduates from public universities. They observed that employers rated graduates with information communication technology (ICT) and communication skills more favorably than other groups. They also found the younger the employer the more favorable was his/her perception of graduates' employability skills. Navehebrahim (2009) observed the higher education quality from the university graduates perspective and witnessed a high degree of satisfaction with the curriculum but a relative satisfaction with the educational experience. He also witnessed low level of satisfaction with the acquisition of research abilities and research experience. He concluded that there is a need to modify the curriculum to become more practical to meet students' needs as well as benefiting from employers perception. Rasul and Puvanasvaran (2009) found employers in the manufacturing industry attach high importance to basic skills, thinking skills, sources skills, resources skills, system and technology skills and personal qualities. Similarly, Zaharim, Yusoff, Mohamed, Omar, Muhamad, and Mustapha (2010) found personal attributes, personal skills, and knowledge are important to employers. On the other hand, Alston, Cromartie, English and Wakefield (2009) surveyed employers perceptions about Land Grant University graduates employability and found that the graduates are prepared in the areas of interpersonal, communication, problem-solving, technology, decision making, and management skills, in addition to technical competence. O'Regan (2010) showed that universities have employability strategies to tackle skills deficiency and to ensure better link between universities, employers and businesses. O'Regan, however, believes that young graduates' problem lies in their approach to labor market. He concluded that graduates'

success is not only measured in their destinations but in how well are they prepared to survive in competitive labor markets.

Anho (2011) conducted a comparative evaluation of how the public and private sector employers perceive universities' graduates employability. He found that there are significant differences in the perception and rating of the quality and employability of the graduates between the public and private sectors. He, however, noticed that while private sector employers rate the quality of university graduates high, the public sector employers give low rateto the quality of graduates. Anho concluded that curriculum should be reviewed to suit the marketplace various industries' needs. In a different line of research, DuPre and Williams (2011) examined graduates' perceptions of employer expectations and found that the employer look for relevant work experience. They concluded out that placing graduates in a field-related work experiences should be high in the academic institutional goals. Similarly, Klibi and Oussii (2013) analyzed students' perceptions about the skills they need to possess to bring them closer to employers' expectations. They found that employers expect graduates to develop generic skills related to ethical awareness, communication, critical analysis and teamwork. They found that employers are expecting graduates to be ready for job more than it is actually the case where gaps exist between students' perceptions and employers' expectations. They proposed that universities have to develop coherent policies and frameworks to promote cognitive intelligence, social, vocational and personal development.

Ismail, Yussof, and Sieng (2011) compared graduates from different institutes and observed that University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) graduates are better in leadership and Malay language proficiency, while graduates from other local universities possess better interpersonal and communication skill, decision making, problem solving skills and team players. Raza and Naqvi (2011) examined employers' perceptions about the quality of university graduates in terms of their development skills such as intellectual, personal, professional, and social. They found that employers are not fully satisfied with the quality of university graduates in various areas of development skills. While they found that personal development skills are strong, social development skills found to be at the lowest level.

Singh and Choo (2012) observed that manufacturing industry employers perceive that the graduate employees' English language proficiency skills are still below their expectations. They concluded universities need to place more emphasis on the importance of English to be in line with globalization and current workplace demands. Ting and Ying (2012) studied practitioners and academicians perception about graduates' employability. They observed similar perception on the importance of business graduates' competencies regarding written skills, oral skills, research skills, knowledge-acquiring skills, honesty, diligence, resourcefulness, value-improving, teamwork ability, innovative skills and computer skills. However, Imeokparia and Kennedy (2012) noticed business graduates thinking skills are not as high as personal quality skill. He concluded that the current level of skills possessed by business graduates is satisfactory to secure placement in the workplace. Padmini (2012) stressed that soft skills are identified to be the most critical skills for technical and management graduates. Padmini observed that it is quite obvious that graduates lack soft skills and communication skills.

MdSaad, Robani, Jano and Ab. Majid(2013) went on to say that problem-solving, tool handling competency and presentation skills are highly featured amongst the skills demanded of graduates by employers. They added that an employee, who possesses the ability to think critically, act logically, and evaluate situations to make decisions and solve problems, is a valuable asset to the organization. Rasul, Rauf and Mansor (2013) added that employers

assign great importance to interpersonal skills, thinking skills and personal qualities that students need to emphasize to be employed in the manufacturing sector. They also provided evidence that employers emphasize that every position, regardless of the size of industry, requires some kind of teamwork.

Balaceanu, Zaharia, Tilea, Predonu, Apostol and Dogaru (2013) measured employers' degree of satisfaction with graduate professional skills. They found that the majority of employers consider that their employees' knowledge is sufficient and corresponds to their needs. They also found the main graduates weakness is lack of practical experience. They concluded that employers recommended adjusting the curricula, including a reasonable number of practical training hours and signing partnerships with the business environment in order to create favorable premises for graduates.

On the other hand, a limited number of studies were conducted in the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) region to explore employers' perception about the quality of university's graduates (see for example, UAE: El-Sakran and Awad, 2012. Bahrain: Sarea and Alrawahi, 2014).

El-Sakran and Awad (2012) performed semi-structured interviews to find out employability skills demanded by UAE engineering companies' employers from new recruits. They observed deficiencies in fresh engineering graduates' oral and written communication skills and some other personal attributes. EL-Sakran and Awad concluded that colleges of engineering in non-English speaking countries should recognize the fact that English fluency is an important condition for a successful in a global economy. Hence, strong emphasis needs to be placed on developing excellence in communication skills, oral as well as written. Sarea and Alrawahi (2014) surveyed accounting practitioners and accounting students opinions about important competencies required for a career in accounting. They noticed that basic accounting skill is rated as the most important professional skill by both groups. They also noticed that while students consider leadership is the least important skill, practitioners think general knowledge is the least important. Sarea and Alrawahi also observed that while students believe that the most effective learning approach is training, practitioners believed that case study approach is the most effective learning approach.

Drawing from the above literature, the current will test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Employers and academicians assign similar levels of importance to knowledge possessed by business graduates in Kuwait.

Hypothesis 2: Employers and academicians assign similar levels of importance to soft skills possessed by business graduates in Kuwait.

Hypothesis 3: Employers and academicians assign similar levels of importance to personal abilities possessed by business graduates in Kuwait.

Hypothesis 4: Employers and academicians assign similar levels of importance to the ability of business graduates in Kuwait to work within a group.

Data collection and study methodology

During May 2014, 400 questionnaires were distributed to employers and academicians. Employers are represented by banks and companies' managers[2]. Academicians are from the

[2] Banks and companies took part in the survey are: National Bank of Kuwait, Gulf Bank, Boubian Bank, Viva Telecommunication, Wataniya Telecommunications, Al-Diar Real Estate,

College of Business Administration of Kuwait University, the only governmental university operating in Kuwait, together with four private academic institutions including the American University of Kuwait, Kuwait Maastricht Business School, Gulf University of Science and Technology and the Arab Open University. Unlike previous studies, the current study classifies employer's requirements for business graduates' employability into four main categories: Knowledge, soft skills, personal abilities and ability to work within a group. Hence, the questionnaire contained four sections to reflect these four categories. The participants, whether employers or academicians, were asked to specify the level of importance they assign to graduates knowledge, skills and personal abilities and ability to work within a group listed in the questionnaire by using 1- 5 likert scale, where 1 denotes not important at all and 5 denotes very important.

Out of the 400 distributed questionnaires, 216 retuned completed resulting in 54% sable response rate. To assess internal consistency of the completed questionnaires, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability was undertaken for the answers of the academicians, employers and the sample at large and appeared to be 0.85, 0.833 and 0.839 respectively. This suggests that the items covered in the questionnaire have a relatively high internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70or more is considered acceptable in social science research.

Descriptive statistics will be used to identify the most important factors that employers expect a business graduate to possess. To identify whether employers/ academicians assign the same levels of importance to employability factors possessed by business graduates in Kuwait, Kruskal- Wallis test will be performed.

Results of the analysis

Participants' background

The first part of the questionnaire seek background information about the participants including: nationality, gender, age, academic qualifications, place of the last academic qualifications and years of experience. A summary of the participants' background is presented in table 1.It evident from the table that the participants' are Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis and they represent both genders almost equally. The participants also cover different age groups and have a range of work experience. The academic qualifications of the participants revealed that all academicians took part in the survey hold PhD and a significant proportion of the employers participants hold high academic degrees. What attracts attention in table (1) is a significant proportion of the academicians who took part in the survey are educated in UK and USA (42%). Similarly, almost one quarter of the employers completed their academic qualifications in UK and USA. The range of differences in the participants' background is expected to give credibility to outcome of the analysis.

Table (1): Summary of the Participants' Background

Alkhrafi International, Tamdeen Real Estate, Kuwait Airways, Al-Arjan, YiacoApolo Medical Company, Al-Ghanim Industries, Al-Muzaini Exchange, AlSafat Mutual Fund.

			Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Nationality	Academicians	Kuwaiti	53	50.5	50.5
		Non-Kuwaiti	52	49.5	100.0
		Total	105	100.0	
	Employers	Kuwaiti	52	46.8	46.8
		Non-Kuwaiti	59	53.2	100.0
		Total	111	100.0	
Gender	Academicians	Male	55	52.4	52.4
		Female	50	47.6	100.0
		Total	105	100.0	
	Employers	Male	57	51.4	51.4
		Female	54	48.6	100.0
		Total	1111	100.0	
Last Academic Qualifications	Academicians	Doctorate	105	100.0	100.0
		Total	105	100.0	
	Employers	University degree	79	71.2	71.2
		Masters	29	26.1	97.3
		Doctorate	3	2.7	100.0
		Total	111	100.0	
Age	Academicians	From 25- 35	13	12.4	12.4
		From 36- 50	52	49.5	61.9
		More than 50	40	38.1	100.0
		Total	105	100.0	
	Employers	Less than 25			
		From 25- 35	45	40.5	40.5
		From 36- 50	57	51.4	91.9
		More than 50	9	8.1	100.0
		Total	111	100.0	
Place of the last academic qualifications	Academicians	Kuwait	13	12.4	12.4
		Arab Country	48	45.7	58.1
		UK	32	30.5	88.6
		USA	12	11.4	100.0
		Total	105	100.0	
	Employers	Kuwait	41	36.9	36.9
		Arab Country	38	34.2	71.2
		UK	16	14.4	85.6
		USA	12	10.8	96.4
		Others	4	3.6	100.0

		Total	132	100.0	
Years of Experience	Academicians	Less than 3 years	3	2.9	2.9
		from 3-10 years	32	30.5	33.3
		from 10- 15 years	46	43.8	77.1
		More than 15 years	24	22.9	100.0
		Total	105	100.0	
	Employers	Less than 3 years	35	31.5	31.5
		from 3-10 years	38	34.2	65.8
		from 10- 15 years	34	30.6	96.4
		More than 15 years	4	3.6	100.0
		Total	111	100.0	

Knowledge Factors

A number of knowledge variables expected to be possessed by business graduates were included in the questionnaire and the participants were asked to express the level of importance they attach to each of these variables. The results of their answers are summarized in table 2.

Table (2):
The importance participants' attach to business graduates knowledge in their employability decision

		N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Rank based on the mean
	Knowledge							
Academicians	Resourcefulness	105	3.48	3.00	0.78	2.00	4.00	4
	Global awareness	105	3.42	3.00	0.83	2.00	5.00	5
	Self-understanding	105	3.57	3.00	0.74	1.00	5.00	1
	Understanding workplace	105	3.56	4.00	0.73	2.00	5.00	2
	Value improving	105	3.56	4.00	0.84	2.00	5.00	2
	Self-quality control	105	3.30	3.00	0.81	2.00	5.00	6
	All	105	3.48	3.00	0.79	1.00	5.00	
Employers	Resourcefulness	111	3.96	4.00	0.80	2.00	5.00	1

	111	3.16	3.00	0.97	2.00	5.00	6
Global awareness							
	111	3.47	3.00	0.83	2.00	5.00	4
self-understanding							
Understanding workplace	111	3.46	3.00	0.67	2.00	5.00	5
	111	3.88	4.00	0.75	2.00	5.00	2
Value improving							
	111	3.63	3.00	0.75	2.00	5.00	3
Self-quality control							
	111	3.59	3.00	0.80	2.00	5.00	
All							

It can be noticed from table 2 that the participants attach a relatively high level of importance to all knowledge factors listed in the questionnaire as reflected by the mean and the median of each of these factors. The relatively low standard deviations appeared on the table indicate that there was low variations in the level of importance that the participants attach to each of the knowledge factors. While the table disclosed that employers took part in the survey attach the highest levels of importance to factors such as resourcefulness, value improving and self-quality control, the academicians assign high levels of importance to self-understanding, understanding workplace and value improving. Both academicians and employers appeared to attach high level of importance to the value improving factor. Similarly, academicians and employers attach low levels of awareness to the global awareness factor. What attracts attention in table (2) is inconsistency in the level of importance that academicians and employers attach to self-quality control.

This result reflects the nature of the Kuwaiti businesses run by employers participated in the survey. Employers covered in the current survey are mainly from the services sector that offers repetitive transactions and activities. It also reflects the environment of these businesses that does not require global awareness. For example, the banking and telecommunications sectors in Kuwait are different than those in the West. This is due to the small size of the market in Kuwait where several banks and companies are competing within this market. This makes the relationship between business operating in the services sector and its customers more intimate than in the west where they have large markets and many customers. The repetitive nature of operation performed by the services firms together with and the small size of these firms and the Kuwaiti market make it easy to understand the work place. Hence, understanding the work place does not seem to be an important factor that determines business graduates employability in Kuwait.

The Kruskal Wallis Coefficients reported in table 3 showed differences in the importance that the academicians and employers assign to the knowledge factors expected to be possessed by business graduates in Kuwait. The differences were evident about factors such as: resourcefulness, global awareness, value improving and self-quality control as reflected by the chi-square and its significance. The table, however, showed consistency in the importance that academicians and employers assign to the self- understanding and understanding the work place factors. Consequently, hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Table (3):
Kruskal Wallis- Knowledge Factors

	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
Resourcefulness	17.218	.000
Global Awareness	4.195	.041
Self- Understanding	.484	.487
Understanding workplace	1.286	.257
Value Improving	7.511	.006
Self-Quality Control	9.646	.002

Soft Skills Factors

The questionnaire contained a number of soft skills and the participants were asked to indicate the levels of importance they attach to each of these skills when recruiting business graduates in Kuwait. The results of their answers are reported in table 4.

Table (4):
The importance participants' attach to business graduates soft kills in their employability decision

		N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Rank based on the mean
Soft Skills Academicians	Oral communication skills	105	3.70	4.00	0.82	2.00	5.00	1
	Writing communication skills	105	3.52	4.00	0.77	2.00	5.00	6
	Presentation skills	105	3.58	4.00	0.81	2.00	5.00	4
	Research skills	105	3.23	3.00	1.05	1.00	5.00	9
	Numerical skills	105	3.59	4.00	0.87	1.00	5.00	3
	Computing skills	105	3.51	3.00	0.79	1.00	5.00	7
	Evaluation skills	105	3.54	4.00	0.91	1.00	5.00	5
	Learning skills	105	3.39	3.00	0.80	1.00	5.00	8
	Analytical skills	105	3.70	4.00	0.76	1.00	5.00	1
	All	105	3.53	4.00	0.84	1.00	5.00	

Employers	Oral communication skills	111	3.57	4.00	0.71	2.00	5.00	7
	Writing communication skills	111	3.59	4.00	0.69	2.00	5.00	6
	Presentation skills	111	3.69	4.00	0.89	2.00	5.00	5
	Research skills	111	3.74	4.00	0.76	2.00	5.00	4
	Numerical skills	111	3.86	4.00	0.80	2.00	5.00	1
	Computing skills	111	3.86	4.00	0.79	2.00	5.00	1
	Evaluation skills	111	3.46	4.00	0.98	2.00	5.00	9
	Learning skills	111	3.53	4.00	0.83	2.00	5.00	8
	Analytical skills	111	3.77	4.00	0.83	2.00	5.00	3
	All	111	3.67	4.00	0.81			

It can be observed from table 4 that the participants attach relatively high levels of importance to all soft skills listed in the questionnaire as reflected by the reported means and the medians. The relatively low levels of standard deviations appeared on Tale 4 point to consensus among the participants about the level of importance they attach each of the soft factors contained in the questionnaire. The table also revealed that academicians attach the highest levels of importance to skills such as oral communications, learning, numerical, and evaluation; whereas, employers attach high levels of importance to skills such as: numerical, computing, analytical and research. Differences in the ranking of importance attached by academicians and employers to soft skills, expected to be possessed by business graduates in Kuwait to enhance their employability, are not significant since the range between skills received highest importance and lowest importance from both participants is low. In addition, the mean of the importance attached by academicians for all of all skills is very close to that of the employers.Once again, the results reflect the nature of the businesses run by the employers participated in the survey. Services businesses require a certain level of numerical, computing and analytical skills, bearing in mind that the participants are mainly employers from the banking and telecommunications sectors. The repetitive nature of work of these sectors requires a limited number of employees to possess learning, writing and presentation skills.

The Kruskal Wallis coefficients presented in table 5 pointed to significant difference in the level academicians and employers attach to research, numerical and computing skills as reflected by the Chi square and its significance. Consequently, hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Table (5):
Kruskal Wallis-Soft Skills

	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
Oral communication skills	.416	.519
Writing communication skills	1.654	.198
Presentation skills	.748	.387
Research skills	14.425	.000
Numerical skills	4.872	.027
Computing skills	10.204	.001
Evaluation skills	.326	.568
Learning skills	2.585	.108
Analytical skills	.870	.351

Personal Abilities

The questionnaire contained a number of personal abilities factors that employers expect business graduates to possess them to ensure employability. The participants were asked to express the level of importance they attach to each of these factors. The outcome of their answers is presented in table 6.

Table (6):
The Importance Participants' Attach To Business Graduates Personal Abilities In Their Employability Decision

		N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Rank based on the mean
	Personal Abilities							
Academicians	Dependability	105	3.53	4.00	0.81	1.00	5.00	8
	Honesty	105	3.70	4.00	0.83	1.00	5.00	3
	Diligence	105	3.50	3.00	0.82	2.00	5.00	10
	Risk assessment	105	3.52	4.00	0.71	1.00	5.00	9
	Risk management	105	3.97	4.00	0.84	1.00	4.00	1
	Time management	105	3.64	4.00	0.81	1.00	5.00	6
	Decision making	105	3.90	4.00	0.79	1.00	4.00	2

		10	3.69	4.00	0.76	2.00	4.00	4
	Career Planning	5						
		10	3.41	3.00	0.87	2.00	5.00	11
	Initiative	5						
		10	3.29	3.00	0.77	2.00	5.00	13
	Flexibility	5						
		10	3.37	3.00	0.85	2.00	5.00	12
	Energetic	5						
		10	3.66	4.00	0.85	2.00	5.00	5
	Passionate	5						
		10	3.58	4.00	0.78	2.00	5.00	7
	Self confidence	5						
		10	3.60	4.00	0.81	1.00	5.00	
	All	5						
Employers		11	3.62	4.00	0.84	2.00	5.00	5
	Dependability	1						
		11	3.48	4.00	0.80	2.00	5.00	8
	Honesty	1						
		11	3.51	4.00	0.92	2.00	5.00	7
	Diligence	1						
		11	3.20	4.00	1.05	1.00	5.00	12
	Risk assessment	1						
		11	3.18	3.00	0.94	1.00	4.00	13
	Risk management	1						
		11	3.35	3.00	0.77	2.00	5.00	10
	Time management	1						
		11	3.29	3.00	0.92	1.00	5.00	11
	Decision making	1						
		11	3.41	4.00	0.81	2.00	5.00	9
	Career Planning	1						
		11	3.87	4.00	0.83	2.00	5.00	2
	Initiative	1						
		11	3.93	4.00	0.87	2.00	5.00	1
	Flexibility	1						
		11	3.62	4.00	0.78	2.00	5.00	5
	Energetic	1						
		11	3.63	4.00	0.83	2.00	5.00	4
	Passionate	1						
		11	3.77	4.00	0.79	3.00	5.00	3
	Self confidence	1						
		11	3.5	4.00	0.86	1.00	5.00	
	All	1						

Table 6 demonstrates that the participants attach relatively high levels of importance to all personal abilities factors covered in the questionnaire as reflected by the reported means and medians. The relatively low reported standard deviations appeared in table 6 indicate that there is a certain degree of consensus among the participants on the level of importance they

attach to each of these factors. The academicians seem to attach the highest levels of importance to factors such as risk management, decision making, honesty and career planning. However, employers attach the highest levels of importance to factors such as flexibility, initiative, self-confidence, passionate, energetic and dependability. While factors such as flexibility, energetic, initiative and diligence received the lowest levels of importance by the academicians, risk management, risk assessment and decision making received the lowest levels of importance by employers. Once again, the results reflect the nature of firms covered in the survey which requires a certain degree of flexibility and initiative. The employee cannot be flexible and initiative unless he/ she is self-confident and passionate about his/ her work.

The Kruskal Wallis coefficient reported in table 7 disclosed a number of significant differences between the surveyed academicians and employers in the importance they assign to various factors of personal abilities expected to be possessed by business graduates in Kuwait as reflected by the chi-squares and their significance. Significant differences appeared in the level of importance assigned to factors such as risk management, time management, decision making, initiative, flexibility and energetic. Marginal differences further appeared the level of importance of factors such as honesty and risk management. Consequently, hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Table (7):
Kruskal Wallis-Personal Abilities

	Chi-Square	**Asymp. Sig.**
Dependability	.396	.529
Honesty	3.340	.068
Diligence	.024	.878
Risk assessment	3.049	.081
Risk management	19.465	.000
Time management	8.337	.004
Decision making	13.807	.000
Career Planning	5.892	.015
Initiative	14.041	.000
Flexibility	31.730	.000
Energetic	5.248	.022
Passionate	.067	.795
Self-Confidence	1.993	.158

Working within Groups

The questionnaire contained a number of factors relating to working within groups and the participants were asked to express the level of importance they assign to each of these factors. The results of their answers are summarized in table 8.

Table (8):
The importance participants' attach to business graduates personal abilities in their employability decision

		N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Rank based on the mean
	Working Within A Group							
Academicians	Adoptability	105	3.69	4.00	0.86	2.00	5.00	1
	Leadership skills	105	3.42	3.00	0.72	2.00	5.00	5
	Teamwork ability	105	3.65	4.00	0.84	2.00	5.00	2
	Working with diversity	105	3.58	4.00	0.68	2.00	5.00	4
	Work ethics	105	3.65	4.00	0.85	2.00	5.00	2
	All	105	3.60	3.80	0.79	2.00	5.00	
Employers	Adoptability	111	3.76	4.00	0.87	2.00	5.00	2
	Leadership skills	111	3.48	3.00	0.74	2.00	5.00	4
	Teamwork ability	111	3.67	4.00	0.85	1.00	5.00	3
	Working with diversity	111	3.33	4.00	0.98	2.00	5.00	5
	Work ethics	111	4.11	4.00	0.80	3.00	5.00	1
	All	111	3.67	4.00	0.85	2.00	5.00	

The academics participants expressed relatively high levels of importance to all working within groups factors contained in the questionnaire. What attracts attention in table 8 is that both the academicians and employers who took part in the survey attached a relatively high level of importance to the factors adoptability, teamwork ability and work ethics. Both academicians and employers attached relatively low levels of importance to the leadership and working with diversity. This result reflects the nature of the Kuwaiti businesses and the Kuwaiti market. The activities of the services firms covered in the current study are repetitive and not diversified. Needless to say businesses in Kuwait are run by a number of families. Hence, leadership posts are mainly restricted to family members, their relatives and others trusted by them. Hence, leadership skills are not viewed as being an important factor in recruiting business graduates in Kuwait.

To identify differences between the level of importance that the surveyed academicians and employers attach to each of working within a group factors, the Kruskal Wallis coefficient was undertaken and reported in table 9.

Table (9):
Kruskal Wallis-Working With A Group

	Chi-Square	**Sig.**
Adoptability	.650	.420
Leadership skills	.252	.616
Teamwork ability	.070	.791
Working with diversity	2.786	.095
Work ethics	14.508	.000

It can be observed from the table that there is insignificant difference between the participants about the level of importance they attached to almost all factors regardless of their background characteristics except for the work ethics. This difference is due to those who attach high importance (5 score) and important (3 or 4 score). Consequently, hypothesis 4 is accepted.

Factoring the four categories used by employers to determine business graduates employability in Kuwait by taking the mean of all variables that formed each factor showed that while the academicians attach high levels of importance to personal abilities and working within a group, employers attach highest importance to knowledge, soft skills and graduates ability to work within groups.

Conclusion

Different studies have been undertaken to determine factors considered by employers when recruiting business graduates. These factors were classified into four categories and included in a questionnaire. academicians and employers were asked to express the level of importance they attach to each of these factors in order to identify to what extent business academic programs respond to labor market's needs. Although the results of the analyses revealed that both the academicians and employers attach high importance to the graduates' knowledge, soft skills and their ability to work within groups, the level of importance attached by the academicians was relatively lower. While academicians appeared to assign highest levels of importance to graduates personal abilities and working within groups, employers attach the highest importance to graduates soft skills and working within groups. What attracts one's attention in the results of the analysis is that academicians considered developing graduates personal abilities as being highly important, whereas employers attached to it the lowest importance among the four categories that affect business graduates employability in Kuwait. Yet, academicians and employers appeared to be consistent about the level of importance they attach to working within groups.

Inconsistency appeared about a number of important variables that formed the remaining three factors that affect business graduates employability in Kuwait. While employers attach high importance to knowledge factors such as resourcefulness and self- quality control, academicians appeared to attach relatively low importance to these two factors. In addition, employers attach high levels of importance to soft skills variables such as computing skills and research skills, while academicians seems to assign low levels of importance to these

variables. Furthermore academicians appeared to assign low levels of importance to personal abilities variables such as flexibility, initiative, self- confidence and dependability; whereas, employers consider these variable as being important in enhancing business graduates employability in Kuwait.

In conclusion, comparison between the importance that academicians and employers attach to employability factors of businessgraduates in Kuwait revealed that the current programs offered by academic institutions need to be developed to respond to market's needs. This requires changes in the contents of these programs in order to develop their inputs and the methods of teaching to improve their output. Business institutions and the Ministry of Higher Education can work side by side with employers in order to provide business students with necessary knowledge and skills to enhance the chances of their employability. The business schools of each academic institution in Kuwait can form a unit to establish contact with major employers and their alumni by conducting regular survey about the market needs in order to update their programs accordingly. With a small market like Kuwait and too many business graduates, the market position of the business school will be determined by their abilities to enhance employability of their graduates. Undoubtedly, this will impact the business school's ranking, its ability to retain existing students and attract future students. This will further impact the business school's survival.

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