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Part 1: Evaluation of Employability Skills

Introduction

Academic credentials provide insufficient guarantee for job employment and professional growth in today's fast-changing employment landscape (Carnevale, 2021). The set of attributes, competencies and personal qualities consisting of soft skills or transferable skills represents the ability which makes individuals more successful at finding and keeping jobs (Growth Works Digital Talent Platform, 2025). Employment skills like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability and time management start to become essential. Every sector throughout the economy considers these capabilities of equal or greater importance than specialized skills and techniques (Poláková et al., 2023).

Successful employment now demands that candidates demonstrate solid employability expertise during both job acquisition and ongoing work retention (Kenayathulla, Ahmad and Idris, 2019). Modern industries demand persistent adaptation from staff members who need to work together as teams and convey information effectively because they operate with advanced technology (Christian et al., 2017). My two target sectors are Retail and Corporate in which I will explore the employability skills required.

Industry and Employers Research

1. Retail Industry

The Retail Industry represents the biggest employment group worldwide while providing diverse positions for fresh recruits, team leaders and corporate staff (Assosia, 2018). AEON Co. (M) Bhd., Tesco (Lotus's), Parkson, Guardian, Watsons, and IKEA serve as leading employers throughout Malaysia's retail sector. Retail jobs require workers to handle four primary functions including customer service alongside sales activities, inventory control, marketing activities and store operational tasks (Indeed Career Guide, 2024a).

Common Job Opportunities (Indeed Career Guide, 2025)	Key Employability Skills (Ritchie, 2017)
Retail Sales Associate	Excellent Communication and Interpersonal Skills
Store Manager	Customer Service orientation
Visual Merchandise	Teamwork and Collaboration
Customer Service Executive	Problem-Solving skills
E-commerce Assistant	Adaptability and Flexibility
Human resource Manager	Time Managements & Organisational abilities
Marketing and Advertising Specialist	Basic IT literacy, especially for e-commerce platforms

Job postings at Watsons and IKEA (IKEA Careers, 2024; Watsons, 2022) indicate an increasing importance on delivering exceptional customer experiences and effective team collaboration and talent in managing quick-paced workplaces.

2. Corporate Industry

A diversity of organizational sectors within the Corporate Industry includes finance, consulting, human resources, marketing and administration (Indeed Editorial Team, 2024). Seven major corporate employers in Malaysia consist of Maybank, CIMB, Petronas, Deloitte, PwC, Maxis, and Telekom Malaysia.

Common Job Opportunities (MasterClass, 2020)	Key Employability Skills (MVNU Communications, 2024)
Human Resources Executive	Analytical and Critical thinking
Business Analyst	Effective written and verbal communication
Marketing Officer	Professionalism and business etiquette
Financial Analyst	Strategic thinking

Administrative Coordinator	Presentation and public speaking skills
Operation Manager	Time management and project coordination
Management consultants	Proficiency in digital tools such as Microsoft Office and data analytics software

In corporate job listings from Maybank and PwC the assessment of work candidates heavily prioritizes leadership development alongside data skills while valuing both independent work capabilities and collaborative team performance (Maybank, n.d.; Maybank, 2018; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2022; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2017) .

Skills Evaluation

I am completing my Bachelor's degree in Business Administration Human Resource Management while mastering a collection of essential employability competencies through academic work, part-time employment, and extracurricular activities.

Communication Skills	Time-management
Teamwork and Collaboration	Digital Literacy
Problem-solving & Adaptability	Customer Service Orientation

Communication allows us to express ourselves and pass on information (Hall, 2022) and this is a major skill I have developed through practice. My abilities in clear expression have dramatically developed through participating in group presentations and academic discussions for both formal settings and everyday conversations. Communication skills are an essential role in my academic life and future professional life.

The capability of collaborating well with others stands equally important to my skills set. Teamwork is essential as it creates strong relationships and improves innovation (Marsden, 2023). Working on group projects together with different people from different backgrounds, improved my capability to work alongside others. Group activities showed me the significance of

active listening alongside achievable compromises to resolve differences in order to reach shared objectives. When my group assignments faced problems, I took initiative to solve them which led to finding alternative solutions by helping identify options for overcoming obstacles that prevented original plans from working.

According to the World Economic Forum (2023), skills like adaptability and time-management are increasingly in demand in both corporate and retail sectors. Online education combined with a hybrid learning environment proved to be a major challenge under the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. My need to adapt to new learning technologies along with varied education formats during the pandemic transition fueled both flexibility and independent motivation. My ability to handle time effectively grew essential so I developed excellent skills for managing my time. Spreading my time among coursework, part-time employment and personal commitments taught me efficient time management and better organization skills.

According to Caitlin (2024), digital proficiency is important as it increases productivity and improves communication. Digital proficiency makes up my core set of technical competencies. My expertise includes Microsoft Office programs Word Excel and PowerPoint together with the visual content design tools provided by Canva. The skills I have for data analysis have room for growth yet I can handle creating charts to organize data and designing clear presentations which benefit both retail and corporate environments.

My work experience at a Study fair to recruit new students and answer inquiries developed my ability to provide exceptional service to customers. Customer service is crucial in order to retain customers and gain customer loyalty (Indeed Career Guide, 2024). As part of my customer service role, I help clients get answers and address their small concerns while remaining courteous and professional. Through direct customer service practice I better understand what customers need while I also learned effective coping techniques when facing hectic high-stress environments.

The combination of these experiences demonstrates an expanding set of employability skills. I recognize the need for growth in advanced digital tool use and professional writing yet I believe

my basic competencies provide an excellent starting point for upcoming professional development.

Comparison with Industry Requirements

Skill	My Level	Retail Industry Requirement	Corporate Industry Requirement
Communication	Strong	Essential for Customer interaction	Crucial for internal and external communication
Teamwork	Strong	Required for store team coordination	Required for project collaboration
Problem-solving	Moderate	Needed in customer conflict resolution	Needed in strategic and analytic tasks
Time management	Strong	Important for shift work and inventory	Crucial for meeting project deadlines
Digital Literacy	Moderate	Useful for POS systems and online retail	Essential for reports, analysis, and virtual meeting
Customer Service	Moderate to Strong	Core requirement	Less critical but valued
Analytical Thinking	Developing	Less emphasised	Highly prioritised
Professional Writing	moderate	Minimal use	Frequently used in reports, emails, and documentation

I have not had any work experience with retail jobs, however I have had similar experiences when working for my university during the study fairs in Malaysia. I handled restocking of information books and pamphlets, making and stocking goodie bags for potential customers, and assisting customers with inquiries about the university. This experience shows my ability to communicate effectively, work under pressure, and provide excellent customer service, aligning well with retail job requirements.

During a university assignment on organisational behaviour, I led a group in conducting a case study analysis and presented our findings using PowerPoint, Canva and written reports. This experience demonstrates presentation skills, collaboration and teamwork, and a growing ability in professional writing, which is vital in corporate environments.

During Covid-19 lockdowns, I adapted quickly to online platforms like Zoom and Google Meet. This taught me to stay organised, manage my own learning pace, and maintain communication with lecturers and peers.

One area I find myself lacking compared to corporate expectations is in data analytics and advanced Excel use. Although I can create charts and simple reports, I recognised the need to further develop these skills to be competitive in a corporate setting.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, I believe that the Retail Industry aligns more closely with my current employability skills, particularly in areas of communication, teamwork, time management, and customer service. My experience with customers, restocking inventory and such has equipped me with practical, real-world skills that directly match the demands of retail employers.

However, I am also interested in pursuing a corporate role in the long term, particular within Human Resource Management. To bridge the gap, I plan to enhance my professional writing, data literacy, and analytical thinking through additional courses and internships.

My personal brand is built around being a reliable, adaptable, and communicative individual who is committed to continuous learning. These attributes resonate well with the values upheld in the retail industry and can also be developed further for success in the corporate world. As I continue to grow academically and professional, I aim to tailor my skill set toward becoming a well-rounded and employable candidate in both industries.

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Part 2: Reflective Essay

The objective of this reflective essay is to analyse and critically appraise skills and knowledge acquired during this International Independent Study Abroad Program. By using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) (The University of Edinburgh, 2024), I will talk about how this experience has benefitted me for my personal and future professional life. This reflection will also examine the relevance of these competencies in actual world academic and professional surroundings. It has allowed me to interact with people from different cultural and academic backgrounds making it a first rate environment for the development of critical employability skills.

Out of this experience, I developed several important skills that really helped me improve both personally and professionally. Cross cultural communication, one of the most prominent concepts that we learned, was when I began to understand that working with peers, who came from different family backgrounds and culture, was that I needed to learn how to be polite and concise in understanding their morals and language (Penn LPS Online, 2020). This was important during team discussions when understanding each other's perspectives was vital for effective collaboration (RCADEMY, 2023). This helped me acquire good teamwork and collaboration skills. The project of Piranha's Pit was where I was assigned to a group where we all had different levels of knowledge and background. This project and other discussions have helped understand the importance of adaptability and working well with different people.

I also experienced a number of challenges such as time differentials, communication and creative differences. These scenarios were those that tested my ability to solve problems and to think and act diplomatically, in order to seek a solution. The Piranha's Pit project also helped me

improve my presentation skills as I had to present my group's ideas confidently and clearly within a specific amount of time. Finally, I enhanced my digital literacy using collaborative tools like Google Docs and Canva, which we used heavily throughout the program. Such skills were not only important for the success of our group while on the exchange program but are also very easy to apply to academic assignments and further professional placement.

The skills that I have learned through the exchange program are directly useful to me as I work on my academic success as well as my future career in Human Resource Management. For instance, cross-cultural communication plays a more important role in the nowadays globalized world (Languagehood, 2024). Many companies operate with different borders and HR executives work with employees from various backgrounds (HR Vision, 2023). It is quite important to be culturally aware and recognize cultural differences in the ability to retain good communication to achieve employee engagement and conflict resolution (Maina, 2021).

The same applies for teamwork and problem-solving skills in university projects and at work. In HR positions professionals have to collaborate with other departments to develop policies, to manage change, to solve personnel issues etc. (CIPD, 2019). Working on virtual meetings and deadlines, my experience has prepared me to have such responsibilities. Furthermore, my enhanced presentation abilities are useful not only for academic evaluations but also for running training sessions and explaining findings to the management as well as making an arguable point when interviewing for a job (EDUGATE-EG, 2025).

In addition, the digital literacy that I improved corresponds to the digital transformation in both educational and corporate settings. Remote work, virtual onboarding and digital project management tools are now a standard process for many organisations (Pinco et al., 2024). My exposure to collaborative tools helps me to improve my performance and readiness to thrive in tech integrated roles.

When analyzed critically, it is clear that the skills that I learned have a tremendously positive impact in terms of academic and professional competitiveness. For example in the case of group coursework, now, it is easier for me to step up and take up leadership roles, delegate duty and

also keep the team working. Confidence that I would gain in public speaking also finds its way in better class participation and more powerful oral presentations.

Skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and emotional intelligence, among others appear to be the top competencies requested from employees, according to the World Economic Forum (2023) Future of Job report. Learning through this exchange program defined the real opportunity to develop and practice these skills. To a student who aspires a career in HR, this makes me advantageous during job interviews, internships and employment afterwards.

Additionally, having operated under pressure and responded to unplanned challenges while in this program, I learnt resilience and adaptability, which are great qualities in a dynamic workplace (Trueprojectinsight.com, 2024). This expansion makes me consider both academic deadlines and work issues while having a more strategic and organized vision.

Even though many skills were learned, at the same time, the reflective process showed a number of gaps in my current skill set. One of the most striking weaknesses is my low level of skill in advanced data analysis tools (Microsoft Excel (pivot tables, macros) and human resource information systems (HRIS). In view of the growing significance of data-driven decision making in HR, this is an area which I need to develop further.

A further area of development lies in professional writing especially in formulating formal reports, policy documents and corporate communications. Though I can write academic essays and basic correspondence, there are places where I can do some polishing of my tone, structure and clarity, in a business context.

In order to cover these gaps in my skillset, I intend to take some active steps in order to make myself more professionally ready. First, I plan to enroll in short online courses in Microsoft Excel and HR analytics available. For example, on the Coursera and LinkedIn Learning platform enabling me to increase my technical competence of today's HR roles. Besides, I will take part in university writing workshops that focus on business communication, and report writing, whereby I will be exposed to internalization of the best professional writing skills in terms of clarity and

tone in formal documents. To have practical experience, I would also be keen on acquiring an internship job to work with the same HR software directly with real world documentation processes. In addition, I will request frequent feedback from lecturers and supervisors regarding both what I am writing in terms of assignments, and how I am using digital tools, in order to discover specific areas I need to improve. By living up to these things I am sure that my skills gaps can be addressed, and that my overall employability and competitiveness as an HR specialist can be substantially enhanced.

Reflecting on my experience with Gibbs' Reflective Cycle has allowed me to realise that certain key employability skills such as communication, team work, digital literacy and problem solving, are of importance in both academic and professional spheres. The exchange program was a benchmark experience which in turn showed how these competencies match what industry expects and how they lead to long term success. Going forward, I intend to develop these skills more by working on collaboration projects, workshops and experience myself by undertaking internships and especially developing my data skills and professional writing to assist me in my career in Human resource management.

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