HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY IN PAKISTAN – HOW ALIGNED ARE THEY?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the perceptions of the 3 key stakeholders involved in higher education and employability –university faculty, employers, and employees. Using semi structured interviews, this research indicated several themes.

Employability was a multifaceted concept whose context varied according to academic subject and employer type. It basically referred to a graduate's ability or potential to secure a job, be successful at it and sustain it.

Employability was influenced by several factors like career development learning, emotional intelligence, degree subject/knowledge, generic skills and the experience gained from work and life. Academic skills were necessary for an employee, and generic or transferable skills mattered regardless of occupation. Skills were developed over the course of one's life, starting from school and then university, and finally the workplace where skill development and assessment was always taking place.

Pakistan had a substantial youth population, and only a small percentage of it had obtained an undergraduate degree. Despite that, many graduates still struggled to find the right job and employers also felt that there was disconnect between what universities were teaching and what the job market required. There was an excess supply of candidates who were studying non-professional degrees and they surpassed the labor market's absorption capacity. It was necessary that universities and their placement offices connected more with their students and gave them proper career options and guidance. Other recommendations included having work integrated learning (WIL), capstone subjects, industry reports, counseling for students, compulsory courses

in computer programs and research methodology, and regular market surveys to be updated about

curriculum requirements.