Article History:
Received: February 14, 2023
Revised: September 29, 2023
Accepted: January 21, 2024

DOI: https://doi.org/10.3126/pycnjm.v17i1.76790
PYC Nepal Journal of Management
Vol. XVII, No. 1, Page: 236-254
ISSN 2091-0258, 2738-9847 (Online)

Preparing Hospitality Graduates: Analyzing Perceived Competency vs. Industry Needs

Bikash Shrestha[1]

[1]Lecturer of Management, Public Youth Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal,
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1081-461X, bikash.shrestha@pyc.tu.edu.np

Abstract: *This study examines hospitality undergraduates' self-perceived employability skills (USEM) before and after internships, using assessments from 90 student pairs. Employing descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests, the findings reveal that students perceive higher skill expectations than actual skill possession. The results indicate that undergraduate hospitality programs may not fully equip students with industry-required competencies, despite their awareness of these expectations. However, off-campus internships provide hands-on learning experiences that enhance employment prospects and help students recognize gaps in their skills. To bridge these gaps, curriculum developers should integrate both generic and technical skills into course designs. Colleges must implement university-designed programs strategically, ensuring that students acquire the necessary competencies. Additionally, academicians should emphasize the importance of USEM model skills and provide opportunities for students to develop them during their studies. Strengthening the connection between academic learning and practical experience will better align hospitality education with industry demands, ultimately improving graduate employability.*

Keywords: employability skill, USEM, hospitality, undergraduates, self-perceived

I. INTRODUCTION

The employability of college graduates has become a critical concern for higher education institutions, companies, government agencies, and economic development bodies (Robst, 2007; Bridgstock, 2009; Aziz & Pangil, 2017). Education plays a key role in equipping individuals with skills that meet market demands (Chhinzer & Russo, 2018). According to Yorke (2004), employability comprises accomplishment skills, understandings, and personal characteristics—that enhance job prospects and career success. These include foundational skills needed to obtain, retain, and perform well in a job (Shafie & Nayan, 2010), covering areas such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and resource management (Fraser et al., 2019).

Research on education and employment often explores human capital theories (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1975) or screening models (Arrow, 1973; Stiglitz, 1975), mainly focusing on graduates' initial employment. However, attention to the transition from education to the workplace grew in the 1990s, with studies using graduate employment success as an indicator of education quality (Schomburg & Teichler, 2006). Universities now align curricula with employment market demands to enhance graduate competencies and career readiness (Teichler, 2009).

Employers seek candidates with both academic skills—reading, writing, science, and math—and higher-order thinking abilities, including reasoning, creativity, and decision-making (Shafie & Nayan, 2010). Twenty-first-century workforce expectations emphasize problem-solving, decision-making, organization, time management, and communication (Hansen, 2010). Despite academic institutions excelling in imparting theoretical and technical knowledge, limited attention has been given to employability skill development, leaving graduates unprepared for job retention and career growth (Cranmer, 2006). Therefore, addressing employability skills is essential for both education and the workforce (Small et al., 2018).

Statement of the problem. There is ongoing debate about the effectiveness of hospitality education in preparing graduates for employment. Employers highlight a lack of industry-ready skills, noting a disconnect between academic learning and practical application (Jenkins, 1999; Stanton, 2006; Anderson, 2007; Brownlie et al., 2008; Belli, 2010; Lilien, 2011). Many institutions claim to prepare students for careers, yet employers find graduates lacking motivation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills (Waryszak, 1999; Ogbeide, 2006; Rasul et al., 2010).

While 70% of institutions believe they adequately prepare students, employers estimate only 40% of graduates meet job requirements (Barton et al., 2013). Studies reveal gaps between academic curricula and industry expectations, indicating the need for skill-oriented training (Jenkins, 1999; Ogbeide, 2006; Kim, 2008). Wright and O'Neill (2002) argued that students and industry practitioners are the best evaluators of educational effectiveness. Graduates often struggle in real-world work settings due to insufficient employability skills (Crawford et al., 2000). Krishna (2017) explored employability skill differences before and after employment, highlighting gaps in preparedness. This study aims to assess senior Nepalese hospitality students' employability skills and identify gaps before and after internships.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical review. Employability models give a framework for students to achieve their full potential and become successful 'value-added' graduates. Many hypotheses have been proposed to explain the concept of university graduates' employability and the elements that influence it. The study by Hillage and Pollard (1998) in this field is considered groundbreaking

since it synthesized all previous and extant theories concerning employability for the first time. The study was helpful in synthesizing thoughts about employability, but it did not explain the underlying components or their relationships, instead focusing on four primary elements: assets, deployment, presentation, and situations.

According to Sumanasiri et al. (2015), there is a clear link between university graduates' employability and their university degree learning activities. As a result, the findings of academic learning outcomes in terms of employability of hospitality management courses in the Nepalese education system will be examined in this study. The study used the USEM Model for that analysis, which is widely regarded as a major advancement in employability research because it was the first time that employability was conceptualized in relation to other constructs.

By representing this in the USEM model of employability, one of the most well-known and respected in the field of employability, Knight and Yorke (2004) suggested that there is a close relationship between employability and good learning and stressed that employability is the result of a blend of achievements in four broad areas. The methodology demonstrated how to teach employability in a pedagogical way including Understanding (subject knowledge and how organizations work), Skills (related to the job, academics, and life), Efficacy beliefs (reflects the learners' notion of self, self-belief, and the possibility for self-improvement and development), and Metacognition (complements efficacy, embraces self-awareness, learning how to learn).

Empirical review. Higher education institutions are evaluated on their ability to prepare graduates for current and future job markets (Danvers & Keeling, 1995). As higher education expands, concerns about graduate readiness persist. Institutions aim to blend academic knowledge with professional, research, and soft skills training (Cox & King, 2006). Employability skills, including problem-solving, communication, and teamwork, are crucial across all professions (Overtoom, 2000; Riordan & Rosas, 2003; Williams et al., 2016). Employers emphasize soft skills over technical competencies when hiring graduates (Robinson, 2006; Clarke, 2007; Kazilan et al., 2009).

Despite efforts to align education with industry needs, discrepancies remain. Hospitality graduates often lack the skills required for dynamic work environments (Neelankavil, 1994; Yucelt, 1998). Employers criticize hospitality programs for being too theoretical, lacking industry engagement, and failing to develop soft skills (Glass et al., 2008). The growing demand for well-rounded graduates underscores the need for institutions to focus on employability training beyond technical education (Husman, 2005; Rasul et al., 2010). Studies highlight technical, personal, and interpersonal skills as key predictors of graduate employability (Sehgal & Nasim, 2017, 2018).

Graduates with both soft skills and technical expertise are more desirable to employers (Williams et al., 2016; Chhinzer & Russo, 2018; Fraser et al., 2019). Employers value

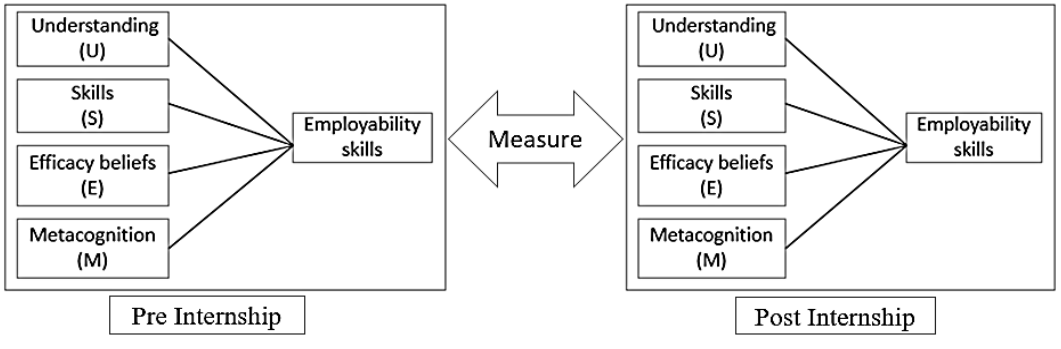
communication and teamwork skills more than technical qualifications, emphasizing the importance of well-rounded training. Dearing (1997) linked employability to life skills, recommending that higher education focus on core competencies for long-term career success. Institutional integration of enterprise education and personal development fosters employability (Rae, 2007). However, industry expectations often differ from what universities provide, highlighting a persistent skills gap (Archer & Davison, 2008).

Employability skills are roughly defined as the core intellectual, personal, and teamwork abilities that businesses expect from prospective graduates or workers and that the educational system is required to cultivate. Employability skills encompass not just the qualities that employers seek in potential employees, but also the basic qualifications that an individual must meet in order to be considered for employment. Employers, regardless of firm size, find soft talents (e.g. communication skills and teamwork) more employable than hard skills (e.g. a high degree, IT abilities) and search for these qualities the most in graduates. Employers also value higher-order thinking skills such as learning, reasoning, creative thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving. These abilities are essential to do a task effectively and contribute to an organization's growth. In this regard, the study utilizes the USEM model of employability in understanding the employability status of senior Nepalese hospitality students and determine the existence of expectation gap in the employability skill: pre and post internship.

Research framework. The theoretical framework consisted of four inter-related modules of employability: understanding (subject knowledge and how organizations work), Skills (related to the job, academics, and life), Efficacy beliefs (reflect the learners' notion of self, their self-belief and the possibility for self-improvement and development), and Metacognition (complements efficacy, embraces self-awareness, learning how to learn). The theory believes understanding, skills and metacognition are the results of efficacy belief and vice versa, which can be acquired from learning. Thus, the study conceptualizes the following conceptual framework as exhibited in *Figure 1.*

Figure 1

Research framework of the study



Employability models provide a framework for students to attain their full potential by instilling skills in the four dimensions of the USEM model and assisting students in becoming successful value-added graduates. The capacity and confidence of hospitality senior students to apply their knowledge and abilities in a variety of contexts, as well as to continue to build their specialized knowledge and skills, is known as employability skill. The operationalization of the variables under investigation is as follows:

The understanding dimension of employability skill has been operationalized as the subject related to general understanding (field of knowledge or specific discipline) and the technical knowledge related to the area of specialization i.e., food and beverage, and rooms division. The skills dimension of employability skill has been operationalized as the required key skills and soft skills such as communication skill, problem solving skill and interpersonal skill. Efficacy beliefs dimension of employability skill measures the self-awareness skills regarding the student's learning, awareness about the career insights and ability of formulating career plans and ability of possessing reflective behavior on, in and for action. Metacognition dimension of employability skill related to hotel jobs related planning and organization, ethics, leadership (persuasion and influence), initiative and entrepreneurship skill and the creativity and innovation.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction to the study organization. The study focused on senior hospitality management undergraduates pursuing a Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) in various national and international affiliated colleges in Nepal. However, due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal Academy of Tourism and Hospitality Management (NATHM) in Kathmandu was selected as the study organization. NATHM was chosen because it is the only government-run college in Nepal offering BHM programs with the largest intake, enrolling 240 students annually.

Research philosophy and design. The study follows a deductive reasoning approach and employs quantitative techniques to validate theoretical foundations and reassess knowledge related to the employability skills of senior hospitality management undergraduates in Nepal. A descriptive and before-after study design was adopted. The descriptive research design examines the status of USEM employability skills among senior hospitality students in two scenarios: pre- and post-internship. Meanwhile, the before-after study design identifies any gaps in students' perceptions regarding their employability skills before and after completing their internship.

Sources of data. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on the USEM model developed by Knight and York (2002), with slight modifications to incorporate elements relevant to hospitality courses. Since the study employed a before-and-after research design, data were collected twice: first, before students joined the

internship program and again after they had commenced their internship, to assess any changes in their perceptions of employability skills.

Sample design. Hospitality colleges in Nepal, both national and international, are affiliated with various universities and conduct internship programs in either the fall or spring semester. The study population comprised all senior hospitality students pursuing a Bachelor of Hotel or Hospitality Management in Nepal who were about to start their internship. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the study focused on NATHM, which has the largest intake, enrolling 240 students annually. The target population consisted of students preparing for their 2021 internship. A convenience sampling technique was used to select a sample of 90 pairs. This sample size aligns with the recommendations by Faul et al. (2007) to determine an effect size of 0.3 and achieve 80% power to establish that the mean of paired differences is significantly different from zero at a 5% significance level ($p<0.05$).

Methods of data collection. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data in two phases using a non-disguised approach. For the first stage, in February 2021, the study engaged with students at NATHM before their internship and requested 127 students to complete the questionnaire, providing their name, email address, and mobile number for follow-up purposes. For the second stage, within a month of starting their internship, the study followed up with the same 127 students in April 2021, per their prior consent. The questionnaire, created using Microsoft Forms, was emailed to them, and follow-up reminders were sent. Out of the 127 initial respondents, 103 were in their internship. After multiple follow-ups, 90 responses were successfully collected. Thus, the study analyzed 90 pairs of responses from both phases, resulting in a total sample size of 180.

Tools and techniques of data analysis. Various descriptive statistical tools were used, including bar diagrams with frequency and percentage to illustrate sample demographics, changes in opinions and attitudes, and employability skill status among hospitality undergraduates. The study used statistical measures such as mean, median, standard deviation, and radar analysis. Inferential statistical techniques included the chi-square test to assess the association between gender and specialization shifts in food and beverage or rooms division before and after the internship. Additionally, a pre-and post-paired sample t-test was conducted to determine whether a gap existed in employability skills among senior hospitality students before and after their internship. A paired-samples t-test is most appropriate when a single sample of subjects is tested multiple times under different conditions, representing varying levels of an independent variable (Ross & Willson, 2017). Each participant is measured on the same dependent variable under different conditions, allowing for a comparison of performance across varying levels of the independent variable (within-subjects design). The study met the assumptions of homogeneity of variance and normality.

Validity and reliability. The construct items were adapted from the previously validated questionnaires by Knight and Yorke (2004), with slight modifications to align with the context of hospitality management employability skills. Consequently, the research instrument used in this study meets validity requirements. Furthermore, the study assessed the internal consistency of the research instruments using Cronbach's alpha. The pre-internship Cronbach's alpha values for the constructs of understanding, skill, efficacy, and metacognition were found to be highly reliable, with values of 0.846, 0.740, 0.837, and 0.738 *(See Appendix 1)* respectively. Similarly, in the post-internship period, Cronbach's alpha values for understanding, skill, efficacy, and metacognition were 0.839, 0.579, 0.780, and 0.803, respectively, demonstrating internal consistency within the research instrument, except for the skill construct in the post-internship period.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transmission of knowledge and skill from the course. One of the purposes of the study was to determine which areas of knowledge and skills (as per USEM model) had been developed within the hospitality degree program prior to their internship program. Undergraduates were asked to respond to the question: 'With respect to your undergraduate degree, please indicate how well the course assisted you in developing the knowledge and skills listed'. Respondents could select one of: 'Not at all', 'Very little', 'To some extent', 'Well' or 'Very well'. The understanding construct included three items namely: subject related general knowledge, food and beverage technical knowledge, and room division technical knowledge. Similarly, skill construct included three items namely: communication skill, problem solving skill and interpersonal skill. Likewise, efficacy construct included three items namely: self-awareness skill, career insights and formulating career plans and reflective behavior. Finally, metacognition construct consisted of five items namely: hotel jobs related planning and organization, ethics, leadership (persuasion and influence), initiative and entrepreneurship, and creativity and innovation.

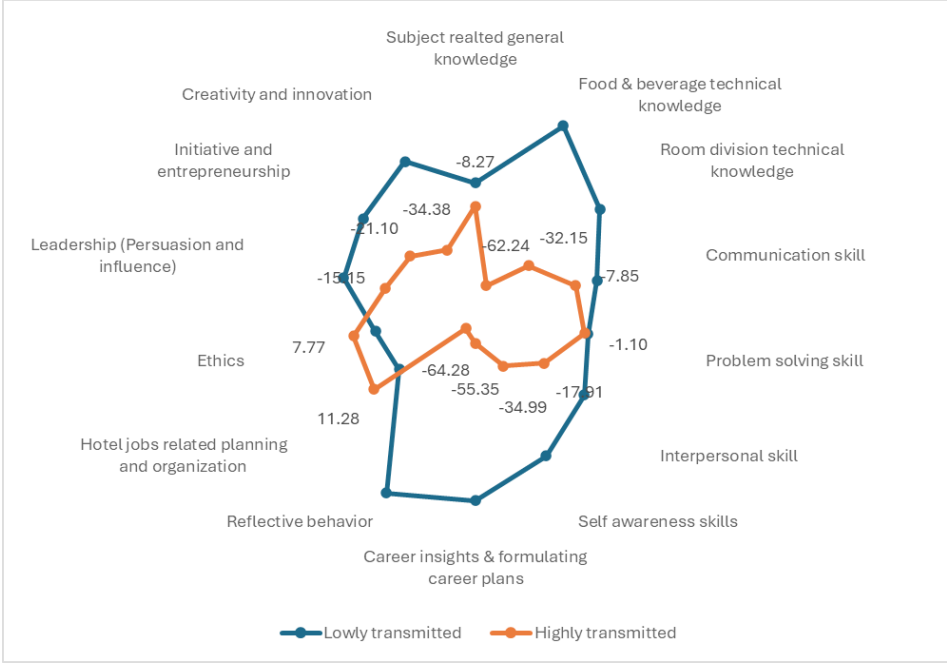
Appendix 2 presents the percentage of undergraduates, in terms of their pre internship opinion, selecting 'Very well' or 'Well', whose responses together were combined as highly transmitted and selecting "Not at all" or 'Very little' as lowly transmitted. In order to ascertain the opinion of how well the knowledge and skills were transmitted in their hotel management course degree post internship period. The same undergraduates who had responded prior to internship programs were approached during their internship through Microsoft forms after getting connected to them via various modes of communication as collected during the first meeting. This would help to elucidate any mismatch between knowledge, skills and capabilities developed in university courses and those required in post-graduation activities through their experience in internship program. The post internship opinion is presented in *Appendix 3*.

To identify discrepancies between the knowledge, skills, and capabilities developed during undergraduate courses and those required in post-graduation activities, this study examined differences in students' self-assessments before and after internships. Employability skill deficits were determined by comparing the percentage of students who rated a skill as highly transmitted ("Very well" or "Well") or lowly transmitted ("Not at all" or "Very little") before and after their internships *(Figure 2)*. The radar chart displays evidence of self-perceived employability skill deficit. The majority of the employability skill dimensions: 12 out of 14 were observed to be in deficit, indicating those skills have been lowly transmitted during their university courses, which was inverse to the result obtained in pre internship period. However, two employability skills were observed to be positively deficit, indicating the undergraduates were highly transmitted in ethics and hotel jobs related planning and organization.

These deficits were calculated by subtracting pre-internship ratings from post-internship ratings (*See Appendix 2 and 3*). For instance, in the case of "Subject-related general knowledge," 71.43% of students initially perceived it as highly transmitted, while 28.57% considered it lowly transmitted. Post-internship, these percentages shifted to 63.16% and 36.84%, respectively, resulting in an employability skill deficit of -8.27% (63.16% - 71.43%). A negative value indicates a decline in perceived skill transmission, whereas a positive value suggests improvement, reflecting the relative development of skills through university courses and internship experiences.

Figure 2

Self-perceived employability skill deficit: Radar chart



Differences in USEM constructs: Pre and post internship. *Table 1* exhibits the descriptive statistics of the variables as suggested by USEM model namely understanding, skill, efficacy and metacognition in both the pre and post internship program during the hospitality undergraduate programs. The mean value was observed highest for the understanding construct (3.58) and was similar at 25th, 50th and 75th percentile as well (3.00, 3.67 and 4.33) among others in pre internship period. Conversely, the lowest mean value was observed in skill construct (2.33) and was similar at 25th, 50th and 75th percentile as well (2.33, 3.00 and 3.67). Likewise, the mean values were observed to be lower for all the variables in their post internship program as opposed to their pre internship opinion. However, the lowest mean values were observed for metacognition construct in post internship period, indicating the hospitality undergraduates lack the employability skills related to metacognition with mean value of 2.30 and was similar at 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile as well (1.67, 2.33 and 2.67) among others.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics

Pre_Post	Statistics		Understanding	Skill	Efficacy	Metacognition
Pre	Mean		3.58	3.14	3.10	3.31
	Std. Error of Mean		0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10
	Std. Deviation		0.95	0.93	0.98	0.98
	Percentiles	25	3.00	2.33	2.40	2.67
		50	3.67	3.00	3.00	3.50
		75	4.33	3.67	3.80	4.00
Post	Mean		2.79	2.89	2.86	2.30
	Std. Error of Mean		0.10	0.08	0.09	0.08
	Std. Deviation		0.98	0.77	0.82	0.79
	Percentiles	25	2.33	2.33	2.35	1.67
		50	3.00	3.00	3.00	2.33
		75	3.33	3.33	3.40	2.67

The study aimed to determine whether the average differences on the USEM constructs were significantly different pre and post internship period across the paired samples. In this regard, the study needs to fulfill the assumption of homogeneity of variance.

Table 2

Test of homogeneity of variance

Pre_Post	Variables	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Pre	Understanding	0.269	1	88	0.605
	Skill	4.403	1	88	0.039
	Efficacy	18.91	1	88	0.001
	Metacognition	6.129	1	88	0.015
Post	Understanding	0.001	1	88	0.985
	Skill	0.245	1	88	0.622
	Efficacy	0.074	1	88	0.787
	Metacognition	0.555	1	88	0.458

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

Table 2 depicts the existence of homogeneity of variance except for the variables understanding 0.269 1,88, P=.605 in pre internship period. Similarly, the variance for all the four variables understanding, skill, efficacy and metacognition were observed to be fulfilling the assumption of homogeneity in the post internship period. Thus, the study could apply the paired sample t test: a parametric test.

The study also requires fulfilling the assumption of normal distribution of the variables under study to test the existence of significant differences of the USEM variables. The study performed Kolmogorov Smirnov test. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test assumes that the parameters of the test distribution are specified in advance.

Table 3

Normality test

Pre_Post	Tests	Statistic	Understanding	Skill	Efficacy	Metacognition
Pre	Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	3.578	3.144	3.096	3.315
		Std. Deviation	0.953	.931	0.983	0.977
	Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.108	.119	0.096	0.141
		Positive	0.072	.119	0.096	0.064
		Negative	-0.108	-.076	-0.074	-0.141
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.027	1.132	0.910	1.334
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.242	.154	0.379	0.057
Post	Normal Parameters[a,b]	Mean	2.793	2.889	2.862	2.296
		Std. Deviation	0.979	0.774	0.823	0.789
	Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.139	0.190	0.155	0.130
		Positive	0.078	0.087	0.079	0.108
		Negative	-0.139	-.190	-.155	-0.130
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.323	1.806	1.474	1.232
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.060	.003	.026	0.096

a Test distribution is Normal. b Calculated from data.

This procedure estimates the parameters from the sample and estimates the sample mean and sample standard deviation are the parameters for a normal distribution. The employability skill scores of 3.578, 3.144, 3.096 and 3.315 for USEM variables prior to internship program were observed to be non-significant indicating that the distribution of the sample is not significantly different from the normal distribution. Likewise, the employability skill scores of 2.793 and 2.296 for the understanding and metacognition variables post internship program were also observed to be non-significant *(Table 3).* It supports the non-violation of normal distribution of the samples at least in majority of the variables in both the pre and post internship programs except for the skill and efficacy constructs post internship programs.

Finally, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the self-perceived differences of hospitality undergraduates in USEM model-based variables in both the pre and post internship period. The 90 pairs of samples were segregated into pre and post internship period. The paired sample t test bootstrap result was based on 1000 bootstrap samples. Thus, normality should not be an issue. *Table 4* displays the mean differences of four pairs of USEM constructs namely: understanding, skill, efficacy and metacognition.

Table 4

Paired sample t test

Pair	Variables	Mean	Bootstrap[a]				
			Bias	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence interval	
						Lower	Upper
Pair 1	UPost - UPre	-.785	-0.004	.150	.001	0.470	1.081
Pair 2	SPost - SPre	-.256	-0.004	.122	.042	0.019	0.496
Pair 3	EPost- EPre	-.233	-0.004	.128	.076	-0.013	0.480
Pair 4	MPost - MPre	-1.019	-0.002	.130	.001	0.759	1.278

a Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

There was a significant difference in the mean scores for post and pre internship for understanding, skill and metacognition variables (M = -.785, -.256 and -1.019, SE = .150, .122 and .130). The difference in mean score is calculated by subtracting the pre internship mean score from the post internship mean score. However, the pre and post difference in the mean score -.233 for the variable efficacy was observed to be non-significant.

These results suggest that self-perceived score in USEM model prior to internship were higher, indicating higher employability skill expectation. The reality was adverse as per the self-perceived post internship employability score. This indicates the hospitality course design does not fulfill the needs of employability skills requirement. However, these results

suggest that internship programs provide the real exposure to the hospitality industry and make undergraduates understand the gap between the theory and the practice.

Discussion. The study compared the employability skills the senior hospitality management undergraduates believed they have acquired during the university undergraduate courses prior to joining the internship and post internship on 14 dimensions of USEM model. The survey evidenced nine of 14 items to be lowly transmitted (food and beverage technical knowledge, room division technical knowledge, interpersonal skill, reflective behavior, hotel jobs related planning and organization, ethics, leadership, initiative and entrepreneurship, and creativity and innovation) as opposed to two items (interpersonal skill and hotel jobs related planning and organization) prior to internship. Hotel jobs related planning and organization item of metacognition dimension of the employability skill was opined to be as lowly transmitted in both the pre and post internship period. The result to some extent is consistent with the findings of Josiam et al. (2010), Clarke (2017), Small et al. (2018) who observed the low transmission of employability skill through self-assessment of employability skill among the undergraduates. These views of undergraduates from a range of genders, course specialization and pre post internship periods very much aligns with what has been reported for graduates in pure science settings (Hanson & Overton , 2010).

The findings indicate that the employability gained is lower in terms of USEM model constructs for undergraduate hotel management students at NATHM. The result to some extent is consistent with the findings of Josiam et al. (2010), who observed the low transmission of employability skill through self-assessment of employability skill among the undergraduates. These views of undergraduates from pre and post internship periods very much aligns with what has been reported for graduates in pure science settings (Hanson & Overton , 2010). The result is also in line with the findings of Harris (2013), Williams et al. (2016), Williams et al. (2019), and Fraser et al. (2019) who discovered that students had higher perceptions in terms of skill importance than they did for skill possession. This suggests that although students recognize the importance of the given skills, they may not be receiving adequate instruction or course demands to equate to proper possession of the skill in acquiring them.

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Irrespective of whether hotel management undergraduates are in their internship or not, they agreed the low transmission of hotel jobs planning and organization skill during their courses at their respective campus. This is the indication of misbalance in the academic outcomes and employment skill possession among the undergraduates in the hospitality industry. The findings of the field study show that certain hospitality graduates' abilities are insufficient to meet industry needs or meet undergraduate expectations. As a result, the study concludes that there is a disconnect between hospitality education outcomes and

industry expectations in terms of what capabilities graduates should have and how well they fit what the market requires. Furthermore, the study finds that comprehension, skill, efficacy, and metacognition skills are poorly transmitted and are significantly different between the pre- and post-internship periods. However, one inference from this finding is that off-campus internship programs appear to provide students with hands-on learning experience, which improves their employment prospects because they are aware of and able to understand the reality of the gaps in employability skills that will be required for future employment opportunities. Professional skills classes were also beneficial to hospitality students because they increased their confidence during internships. This finding supports a greater emphasis on the development of USEM abilities as part of better preparing students for future work by including them in undergraduate courses.

As suggested by the USEM and current study, it is critical to ensure that graduates and undergraduates are equipped with twenty-first century skills such as problem solving and analytic, decision making, organization and time management, risk taking and communication, as well as other employability skills. As a result, when revising the curriculum, curriculum writers must consider both generic and technical skills. In addition, colleges must implement the university-designed courses with prudence and proper planning to guarantee that hotel management students are equipped with necessary employability skills that they believe have been under-transmitted. Academicians may also take this information into account when counseling undergraduates on the need to develop USEM model abilities and providing them with opportunity to do so during their degree programs.

The current research is one-dimensional, focusing just on undergraduate students. Students frequently exhibit less-than-ideal work attitudes (for example, they are unable to enjoy work, cannot tolerate working long hours, exhibit passivity, instability, are unable to handle stress, and have low resilience). This disparity indicates that students rate their competencies higher than their supervisors. As a result, more study is needed to consider the perspectives of academics and industry practitioners, identify gaps in employability skills, and implement relevant interventions to help undergraduates majoring in hospitality enhance their employability skills. The findings of such triangulation study might be a valuable source of knowledge when it comes to developing hospitality degree programs.

REFERENCES

Anderson, N. (2007). The practitioner-researcher divide revisited: strategic – level bridges and the roles of IWO psychologists. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, *80*(2), 175-183. https://doi:10.1348/096317907X187237

Archer, W., & Davison, J. (2008). Graduate employability: What do employers think and want? Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE).

Arrow, K. J. (1973). Higher education as a filter. Journal of Public Economics, *2*(3), 193-216. https://doi:10.1016/0047-2727(73)90013-3

Aziz, A., & Pangil, F. (2017). Moderating effect of and emotional intelligence on the relationship between skills and employability. International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, *7*(3), 1-22.

Barton, D., Farrell, D., & Mourshed, M. (2013). McKinsey & company. Retrieved from Education to employment: Designing a system that works: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/education-to-employment-designing-a-system-that-works#

Becker, G. S. (1975). Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special refernce to education. University of Chicgo Press.

Belli, G. (2010). Bridging the researcher-practitioner gap: views from different fields. Teaching statistics. Ljubljana. Retrieved from http://icots.info/icots/8/cd/pdfs/invited/ICOTS8_1D3_BELLI.pdf

Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. Higher Education Research & Development, *28*(1), 31-44. https://doi:10.1080/07294360802444347

Brownlie , D., Hewer, P., Wagner, B., & Svensson, G. (2008). Management theory and practice: Bridging the gap through multidisciplinary lenses. European Business Review, *20*(6), 461-470. https://doi:10.1108/09555340810913494

Chhinzer, N., & Russo, A. M. (2018). An exploration of employer perceptions of graduate student employability. Education + Training, *60*(1), 104-120. https://doi:10.1108/ET-06-2016-0111

Clarke, M. (2007). Where to from where? Evaluating employability during transition. Journal of Management & Organization, *13*(3), 196-211. doi:10.5172/jmo.200713.3.196

Clarke, M. (2017). Rethinking graduate employability: the role of capital, individual attributes and context. Studies in Higher Education, *43*(11), 1923-1937.

Cox, S., & King, D. (2006). Skill sets: An approach to embed employability in course design. Education Plus Training, *48*(4), 262-274. https://doi:10.1108/00400910610671933

Cranmer, S. (2006). Enhancing graduate employability: Best intentions and mixed outcomes. Studies in Higher Education, *31*(2), 169-184. https://doi:10.1080/03075070600572041

Crawford, C., Brungarldt, C., & Maughan, M. (2000). Understanding leadership. Rocky Mounain Press.

Danvers, H., & Keeling, H. (1995). Is education meeting the management needs of industry? The debate continues. Hospitality:The HCIMA Magazine, 150, pp. 21-22.

Dearing, R. (1997). Higher education in the learning society. HMSO.

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A. G., & Buchner , A. (2007). G*Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. Behavior Research Methods, *39*(2), 175-191.

Fraser, C. J., Duignan, G., Stewart, D., & Rodrigues, A. (2019). Overt and covert: Strategies for building employability skills of vocational education graduates. Journal of Teaching Learning and Graduate Employability, *10*, 157-172.

Glass, A., Landsburgh, H., Quashie, A., & McGregor, A. (2008). The work-readiness of recruits from colleges and universities in Scotland: Full report. University of Glasgow.

Hansen, R. S. (2010). How to build and expand your career network?: 10 proven techniques. Quintessential Careers Quintzine, *11*(5), 1-17. Retrieved from www.quintcareers.com/ expanding_career_network.html

Hanson, S., & Overton , T. (2010). Skills required by new chemistry graduates and their development in degree programmes. University of Hull.

Harris, S. (2013, Septemebr 12). Half of employers say graduates are 'not up to the job': findings fuel fears universities fail to equip students with life skills. Daily Mail. Retrieved January 12, 2021, from www.dailymail.co. uk/news/article-2419431/Half-employers-saygraduates-job-Findings-fuel-fears-universities-failequip-students-life-skills.html

Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998). Employability: Developing a framework for policy analysis. Department for Education and Employment.

Husman, S. H. (2005). Development of technology and technical-vocational education and training in an era of globalization: Trend and issues. Meeting the needs of employers. Kuala Lumpur.

Jenkins, C. (1999). Tourism academics and tourism practitioners: Bridging the great divide. Routledge.

Josiam, B. M., Devine, F. G., Baum, T., Crutsinger, C., & Reynolds, J. S. (2010). Attitudes to work of Generation Y students in hospitality management: A comparative analysis of students in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education, *22*(1), 44-53.

Kazilan, F., Hamzah, R., & Bakar, A. R. (2009). Employabilty skills among the sudents of technical and vocational training centers in Malaysia. European Journal of Social Sciences, *9*(1), 147-160. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228768574

Kim, J. H. (2008). Career expectations and requirements of undergraduate hospitality students and the hospitality industry: An analysis of differences. Masters' thesis, AUT University. Auckland. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10292/477

Knight , P., & Yorke , M. (2004). Learning, curriculum andeEmployability in higher education. Routledge Falmer.

Krishna, H. G. (2017). A study of employability determinants in pre and post employment scenario with referenec to Kancheepuram district Tamil Nadu state. PhD Thesis, AMET Univerity. Tamil Nadu. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10603/198119

Lilien, G. L. (2011). Bridging the academic-practitioner divide in marketing decision models. Journal of Marketing, *75*(4), 196-210. https://doi:10.1509/jmkg.75.4.196

Neelankavil, B. (1994). Corporate America's quest for an ideal MBA. Journal of Management Development, *13*(5), 38-52. https://doi:10.1108/02621719410058374

Ogbeide, G. C. (2006). Employability skills and students' self-perceived competence for careers in the hospitality industry. PhD thesis, University of Missouri. https://doi:10.32469/10355/4403

Overtoom , C. (2000). Employability skills: An update. Center on Education and Training for Employment, 220. Columbus, OH: Eric Digest. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED445236

Rae, D. (2007). Connecting enterprise and graduate employability: Challenges to the higher education culture and curriculum? Education + Training, 49(8/9), 605-619. https://doi:10.1108/00400910710834049

Rasul , M. S., Ismail, M. Y., Ismail, N., Rajuddin, M. R., & Rauf, R. A. (2010). Development of employability skills assessment tool for manufacatring industry. Jurnal Mekanikal, *30*, 48-61. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/25251028

Riordan, T., & Rosas, G. (2003). Core work skills: ILO perspective and recent developments. Skills for Life and Work, (pp. 17-21). Geneva.

Robinson, J. S. (2006). Graduates and employers perceptions of entry level employability skills needed by agriculture, food and natural resources graduates. PhD thesis, University of Missouri. Columbia, MO. https://doi:10.32469/10355/4328

Robst, J. (2007). Education and job match: The realtedness of college major and work. Economics of Education, *26*(4), 397-407. https://doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2006.08.00

Ross, A., & Willson, V. L. (2017). Basic and advanced statistical tests. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. https://doi:10.1007/978-94-6351-086-8_4

Schomburg, H., & Teichler, U. (2006). Higher education and graduate employment in Europe: Results from graduate surveys from twelve countries. Springer.

Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. The American Economic Review, *51*(1), 1-17. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/1818907

Sehgal, N., & Nasim, S. (2017). Predictors of graduate employability in Indian information technology sector. International Journal of Human Resources Develpment and Management, *17*(3/4), 247-265. https://doi:10.1504/IJHRDM.2017.087123

Sehgal, N., & Nasim, S. (2018). Total interpretive structural modelling of predictors for graduate employability for the information technology sector. Higher Education, Skills and Work Based Learning, *8*(4), 495-510. https://doi:10.1108/HESWBL-08-2017-0047

Shafie, L. A., & Nayan, S. (2010). Employability awareness among Malaysian undergraduates. International Journal of Business and Management, *5*(8), 119-123. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9f55/de6c3c6069a9b068c5149f03079be0554171.pdf

Small, L., Shacklock, K., & Marchant, T. (2018). Employability: a contemporary review for higher education stakeholders. Employability: A contemporary review for higher education stakeholders, *70*(1), 148-166.

Stanton, A. D. (2006). Bridging the academic/practitioner divide in marketing: An undergraduate course in data mining. Marketing Intelligence & Planning, *24*(3), 233-244. https://doi:10.1108/02634500610665709

Stiglitz, J. E. (1975). The theory of screening, education and the distribution of income. American Economic Review, 65(3), 283-300. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/1804834

Sumanasiri, E. G., Yajid, M. S., & Khatibi, A. (2015). Conceptualizing learning and employability framework. Journal of Education and Learning, *4*(2), 54-63. https://doi:10.5539/jel.v4n2p53

Teichler, U. (2009). Higher education and the world of work: Conceptual frameworks, comparative perspectives, empirical findings. *Global Perspectives on Higher Education*, *16*. Sense Publishers. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6172/ed59b84e49a72b07d3e8f230b8c2500cf634.pdf

Waryszak, R. (1999). Students' expectations from their cooperative education placements in the hospitality industry: An international perspective. Education + Training, *41*(1), 33-40. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ580938

Williams, S., Dodd, L. J., Steele, C., & Randall, R. (2016). A systematic review of current understandings of employability. Journal of Education and Work, *29*(8), 877-901.

Williams, S., Karypidou, A., SteeleC, & Dodd, L. (2019). A personal construct approach to employability: Comparing stakeholders' implicit theories. Education Plus Training, *61*(4), 390-412.

Wright, C., & O'Neill, M. (2002). Service quality evaluation in the higher education sector: An empirical investigation of students' perceptions. Higher Education Research & Development, *21*(1), 23-39. https://doi:10.1080/07294360220124639

Yorke, M. (2004). Employability in the undergraduate cumulus: Some student perspectives. European Journal of Education, *39*, 209-227. https://doi:10.1111/j.1465-3435.2004.00194.x

Yucelt, D. (1998). Comaparative study of students' perception on quality of MBA programs. Journal of International Marketing and Marketing Research, *23*(1), 27-33.

Funding

The author received funding or financial support from Research Directorate, Rector's Office, Tribhuvan University in carrying out the research.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared having no conflict of interest in the research work.

APPENDICES

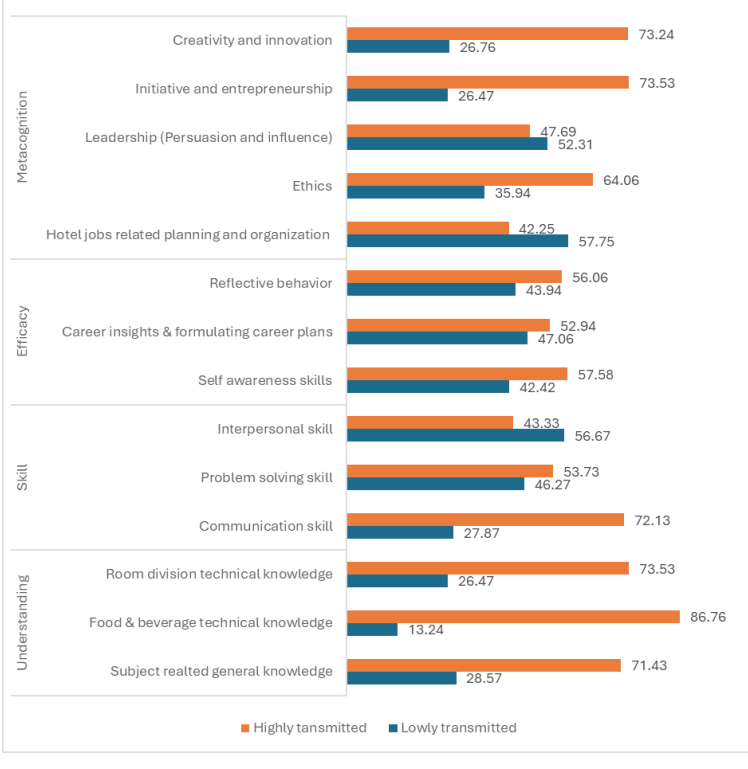
Appendix 1

Test of internal consistency

Variables	Pre internship Cronbach's alpha	Post internship Cronbach's alpha
Understanding (U)	0.846	0.839
Skill (S)	0.740	0.579
Efficacy beliefs (E)	0.837	0.780
Metacognition (M)	0.738	0.803

Appendix 2

Transmission of knowledge and skill from the course: Pre internship



Appendix 3

Transmission of knowledge and skill from the course: Post internship