

CONCEPTUALISATION OF GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP, INTERCULTURAL
COMPETENCE, AND DOMESTIC INTERNATIONALISATION IN ENHANCING
GRADUATES' GLOBAL EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract

The global graduate skills gap in the 21st century has been considered a global and significantly widespread issue. There is a shortfall in skill attainment across the board, as well as a mismatch in expectations among students and employers, especially for the global employability quest. Stiff challenges for global job mobility strain the higher education institutions, especially in Malaysia, to revise their academic and practical curriculum in preparing graduates to meet global employability requirements. Thus, this paper mainly proposes the graduates' global employability paradigm, which is reflected by the internationalisation process, which is moderated by the institutional support. This paper reviews scholarly studies that use a thematic inquiry. The Malaysia Critical Occupations List (MyCOL) has identified a skills gap, particularly among Malaysian graduates. This paper thematically highlights the ways in which graduates' global employability is believed to be influenced by internationalisation at home (IaH), intercultural competency, global citizenship, and institutional support. Therefore, by engaging graduates to be more marketable globally

based on their skills and academic backgrounds, HEIs, stakeholders, and the government work together to mitigate the effects of the global digital economy.

Keywords: Global citizenship; global employability; intercultural competence; internationalisation at home; Malaysian graduates

Abstrak

Jurang kemahiran siswazah global pada abad ke-21 telah dianggap sebagai isu global dan meluas dengan ketara. Terdapat kekurangan dalam pencapaian kemahiran secara menyeluruh, serta jangkaan yang tidak sepadan dalam kalangan pelajar dan majikan, terutamanya untuk usaha kebolehpasaran global. Cabaran sengit untuk mobiliti pekerjaan global memberi tekanan kepada institusi pengajian tinggi, terutamanya di Malaysia, untuk menyemak semula kurikulum akademik dan praktikal mereka dalam menyediakan graduan untuk memenuhi keperluan kebolehpasaran global. Oleh itu, kertas kerja ini khusus mencadangkan paradigma kebolehpasaran global graduan, yang dicerminkan oleh proses pengantarabangsaan, serta disederhanakan oleh sokongan institusi. Senarai Pekerjaan Kritikal Malaysia (MyCOL) telah mengenal pasti jurang kemahiran khususnya dalam kalangan graduan Malaysia. Kajian ini secara tematik menekankan kaedah kebolehpasaran global graduan yang dipercayai dipengaruhi oleh pengantarabangsaan di negara asal (IaH), kecekapan antara budaya, kewarganegaraan global, dan sokongan institusi. Oleh itu, dengan melibatkan graduan supaya lebih boleh dipasarkan di peringkat global berdasarkan kemahiran dan latar belakang akademik mereka, IPT, pihak berkepentingan, dan kerajaan bekerjasama untuk mengurangkan kesan ekonomi digital global.

Kata kunci: Graduan Malaysia; kebolehpasaran global; kecekapan antara budaya; kewarganegaraan global; pengantarabangsaan di rumah

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Precipitated by the war in Ukraine and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis has hurt incomes and livelihoods around the world, especially in the developing countries (International Labour Organization, 2023). The International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that mutually reinforcing crises, including rising debt levels, are disproportionately affecting developing countries, worsening the global employment divide between high-income and low-income countries, and widening existing inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This 2022 ILO report also highlighted that global unemployment in 2023 is expected to fall below pre-pandemic levels – to 191 million,

corresponding to a global unemployment rate of 5.3 percent estimates show that low-income countries remain far behind in the recovery process (International Labour Organization, 2024).

There are multiple driving forces changing the shape of work, and the required skills for the future include rapid technological advancements, social demographic shifts, personal purpose and responsibility, changes in business and economy, and sustainability (QS Quacquarelli Symonds, 2022). A general saying stated graduates nowadays tend to overvalue the importance of creativity and leadership, skills and undervalue the importance of global mindfulness, flexibility/adaptability, and intercultural skills, which employers regard with high importance. These discrepancies call for raising awareness so that students are informed about which skills organisations prioritise before they graduate. It may also indicate that universities are failing to adequately train students in areas that are essential for successful employment.

In 2022, the unemployment rate in Malaysia was at approximately 3.73 percent, which is relatively low and stable at around three percent, which means the population is experiencing close to full employment (O'Neill, 2024). However, the pace in getting the job upon graduating and/or getting the desired job (match with studying area of studies) is debatable. It has been reported that graduates have been lacking certain skills, such as soft skills, especially problem solving and communication skills (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014), and hard skills, such as lack of technical knowledge, difficulty in applying knowledge, and lack of English communication skills (Lim, Lee, & Yap, 2016). Mismatch of skills is also reported as another cause of unemployability of Malaysian graduates, whereby it was reported that about 30,000 graduates worked in a field that did not match with their higher educational qualifications (Hanapi & Nordin, 2014). Shanmugam (2017) reported that only 53 percent of the 273,373 graduates in 2015 secured employment within six months of graduation, 24 percent of graduates were unemployed, and 18 percent engaged in tertiary studies; meanwhile, 53 percent secured employment cited that there was a mismatch between the training provided at universities and skillsets required by employers; apparently, most university curriculum does not reflect the current skill requirements by the industry (Shanmugam, 2017).

The most pronounced skills gap among graduates has emerged in dealing with conflict and adaptability at a diverse workplace. Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a role in developing the tools to nurture employability skills among students. Hence, HEI-industry smart partnership and collaboration are demanded to share practices and solutions to the graduates'

effective employability skills gap. In macro level, the ethnic fidelity of a person has much influence on their way of life, which varies from one group to another due to the socio-cultural variation of ethnicity (Rozaimie, 2018; Rozaimie & Ali, 2014) and other demographic and socio-political profiles (Beginda & Bala, 2018). Therefore, global graduates require a blend of competencies and corresponding attributes spanning global mindsets, cultural agility, and relationship management and must be able to apply them flexibly, especially for the global mobilities of workforces. In specific, global employability of graduates can be defined as their capacity to identify, critically analyse, assess, and evaluate real issues and problems involving complex situations that can occur in an international business context and be able to provide alternative courses of action and recommendations.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature suggested the presence of several major theoretical frameworks that attempt to identify the concept of employability among university graduates and its underlying factors. Among the many frameworks, global employability signifies “enabling” learning environments where students encounter ill-formed and open-ended problems and are required to adapt and be creative (Isomöttönen et al., 2019). Furthermore, Van Gaalen and Gielesen (2014) argued that internationally and interculturally competent graduates can best be achieved “if institutions consciously create controlled situations that lead to intercultural collaboration and the utilisation of students’ specific international knowledge.” Global employability ideally comprises four competencies, including core academic competencies, occupational competencies, personal and social capabilities, and career knowledge and transition skills.

In cultivating internationalisation and intercultural learning towards global employability, according to Jones (2013, 2016), “it is clear that domestic environments could play an equivalent role in offering opportunities for experiential learning in an intercultural context, taking people beyond their comfort zones” (Jones, 2013). It’s indicated that work placements at international organisations in the home country have highly potential for delivering internationalised professional and personal skills and knowledge. Soria and Troisi (2014) suggested that Internationalisation at Home (IaH) programs may yield greater benefits than study abroad in terms of acquiring global, international, and intercultural competencies. Scholars (Chan & Lin, 2015; Andrews & Higson, 2008) argued that the university’s curriculum needs a paradigm shift in preparing students for employment and closing the ‘graduate skills gap’.

Along with hard skills designed for academic curriculum enrolled, the graduates are also expected to be equipped with essential dynamic soft skills demands by the disruptive job market (Chamorro-Premuzic et al. 2010; Turner & Mulholland, 2017). These casualties stress the need for global employability through improved collaboration between universities and industry to overcome the challenges of unemployment and mismatch of skills. It is crucial to incentivising the engagement of Malaysian students in global curricula and connecting students interculturally. In the global job market, employers clearly expected their personnel to demonstrate a significant cross-cultural skill (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2011), whereby international market competitiveness for graduate recruitment is intensifying (Parks, Williamson & Gardner, 2011). Thus, this paper primarily conceptualised a research framework by considering the key determinants for global employability, including internationalisation at home, intercultural competence, and global citizenship. These determining factors might prepare graduates to serve the global job market by having the desired employability skills for the 21st century. This paper highlights the need to encourage universities to yield internationally, interculturally, and globally competent graduates who are capable of meeting the job requirements of the global market. Additionally, this paper emphasised the need for improved collaboration and networking between local and international industry and HEIs, especially in the Malaysian context.

2.1 Graduate Employability Quality

Beyond unemployment rates, a new indicator developed by the ILO, the jobs gap, i.e., offers a more comprehensive measure of the unmet demand for employment, especially in developing countries (International Labour Organisation, 2023). It captures all people who would like to work but do not have a job. Variations in the job gap point further to a global employment divide. Low-income countries face the largest jobs gap rate at an alarming 21.5 percent, while the rate in middle-income countries stands slightly above 11 percent. High-income countries register the lowest rates, at 8.2 percent. Furthermore, low-income countries comprise the only country income group that has seen a long-term rise in the jobs gap rate, from 19.1 percent in 2005 to 21.5 percent in 2023 (International Labour Organisation, 2023). However, the Top Employers Institute has shown that the top three people priorities for these organisations in 2023 will be to create a high-performance culture, develop new leadership capabilities, and align purpose, vision, and values (TalentCorp Malaysia, 2023a).

The economic and industrial revolution contributes to the demands for global employability evolving from labour-intensive towards capital-intensive to knowledge-economy

and technological knowledge. We are currently in the 24th year of the 3rd millennium of the 21st century and have been seeing significant changes in the global employability landscape on the rise of adaptable skill endemic COVID-19 on remote work and artificial intelligence (AI) reshaping the job market. Obviously, the job market nowadays targets work efficiency and mobility cost abolishment with the application of AI, which has transformed customary work practices with an accompanying shift in demand in the skills required by employers. New roles and opportunities are created, and existing ones are redefined to keep up with the changing demands of the 21st-century labour market (Evans-Greenwood, O'Leary, & Williams, 2015). The ILO's World Employment and Social Outlook (WISO) Trends 2024 reported that an extra two million workers are expected to be looking for jobs, raising the global unemployment rate from 5.1 percent in 2023 to 5.2 percent, whereby disposable income has declined in the majority of G20 countries and, generally, the erosion of living standards resulting from inflation is "unlikely to be compensated quickly" (International Labour Organisation, 2024).

Despite the fluctuations in job markets, the ability to shift the paradigm to absorb the dynamic of employment challenges foresees the employers expecting the personnel to possess relevant personality traits and employability skills to accommodate the ever-changing demands of work (Messum, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2015; Messum et al., 2017). Graduates' quality and aptitude determine employability (Vashisht, Pandey, & Pathak, 2016), to which employability is more crucial than job security (Saad & Majid, 2014). From Malaysian perspectives, the Malaysia Critical Occupations List (MyCOL) is the informational stream that identifies the skills imbalance across 18 economic sectors in Malaysia (TalentCorp Malaysia, 2023b). Specifically, the MyCOL is established by the Critical Monitoring Committee (CSC), collated on an annual basis led by TalentCorp and the Institute of Labour Market Information and Analysis (ILMIA). MyCOL was developed based on recommended international practices and aims to be the primary source for aligning and coordinating human resource policies aimed at attracting, nurturing, and retaining talents, especially in Malaysia. The MyCOL helps to provide a comprehensive map of Malaysia's job market to capture the demands for the current and future skills and talent concerning Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0. In addition, MyCOL is a significant initiative toward the development of the Malaysia National Skills Registry (MyNSR) that acts as a reference for Malaysian skills standards. Mismatch between competent personnel and graduates' qualifications coined in the MyCOL 2022/2023 reports create employment challenges faced by the aerospace, construction, and food processing sectors in Malaysia (TalentCorp Malaysia, 2023b). The MyCOL reports (TalentCorp Malaysia, 2023b) indicated that employment casualties happened due to the:

- a) Skills Shortage and Mismatch Feedback from the consultation stakeholders revealed growing concerns about the skills mismatch among the local workers. The skills and competencies of the workforce, particularly the fresh graduates, do not meet the requirements of industry.
- b) Underemployment issues in the Malaysian labour market have been suffering from underemployment for a long period of time. Many graduates are unable to secure suitable jobs matching their qualifications and skills or jobs with remuneration that is commensurate with their qualifications.
- c) Difficulties in talent retention have become increasingly challenging for companies in Malaysia, including those within the aerospace, construction, and manufacturing (food processing) industries. Widespread reduction in economic activities and job losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic has led to many workers seeking alternative employment opportunities, such as providing ride-hailing and food delivery services in the gig economy.

A key reason for the skills shortage and industry-graduate mismatch is the lack of effective planning and collaboration among the government, learning institutions, and the industries to keep the education syllabus up-to-date and relevant to current and future industry demands. Underemployment issues arise due to the limited availability of higher-skilled occupations in the sector, to which graduates have learnt outdated skills while studying at the university. As a result, the graduates are forced to take up roles that do not make full use of their skills and education knowledge when they enter the workforce. Skills and ability identify the employability competency of a person in performing the job. Petersen and Heikura (2010) stated that competence is primarily developed through a combination of the skills necessary for the job, the individual's delivery abilities, and the relevant knowledge. Obviously, an academic institution primarily provides a person with knowledge (facts, procedures, principles, and theories), while job skills are associated with mental operations that process this information (Jingura & Kamusoko, 2019). Cultural differences and other socio-ecocultural environmental factors (Rozaimie, 2018; Rozaimie & Ali, 2014) may influence job ability and intelligence, which corresponds to the field of competency reflecting the learning outcome in the HEIs as reported by the scholars (Maciejewski et al. 2020). The learning outcome, specifically what the graduates are expected to comprehend, becomes a key performance indicator (KPI) of higher learning institutions to ensure the academic program offered is continuously relevant. This learning outcome reflects the use of labour market intelligence to ensure that the education and training system, as well as academic support for education,

training, and learning, are balanced. From Malaysian perspectives, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) is a statutory body established under the Malaysian Qualifications Act 2007 to accredit academic programs offered by educational institutions that provide higher education, as well as to facilitate qualification accreditation and articulation. Academic qualification accreditation is crucial to ensure a quality academic program offered is recognised by the industry and applied internationally.

A shortage of competent skilled and semi-skilled workers in the local labour market apparently happened post-COVID-19 pandemic, where many skilled and semi-skilled foreign workers previously working in Malaysia permanently returned to their respective countries. To some Malaysian skills workers tend to enjoy higher earning potential and greater work flexibility overseas. Clearly stated that employment mismatch happened due to lack of communication and beneficial collaboration between universities and employers (industry) to ensure that academic programs aligned with the needs of the job market. Adding the spice, the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) also voiced the similar worries over the underemployment and employment mismatched scenarios in Malaysia. The MEF strongly urged that graduates make use of the Graduate Employability Management (GEM) digital platform to apply for internships and job opportunities, whereby the employers recommended investing in upskilling their workforce through the MEF training academy (Malaysian Employers Federation, 2024). Despite possessing field-specific knowledge, graduates need to mix the knowledge with significant technical and soft skills to serve the job market, especially in the private sector. Universities expected to become a feeder to the industry in preparing the students for the job market (Suleman, 2021; Cassidy, 2017). Graduates presumed employable if they possess skills that required by businesses, referred to in the literature as employability skills (Ciarocco & Strohmetz, 2018; Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023).

There is a disparity between the cognitive structures that graduates are taught and how they apply the competencies expected by the industry (Cowley et al., 2012). The learning content follows the structure of academic disciplines, but real-life problems and challenges rarely fit neatly into the field of a single academic discipline. Researchers (Coi et al., 2007) defined competence as a combination of competency, proficiency level, and context. HEIs ought to concentrate on understanding competence and the competence development process in a lifelong learning context. Establishing the connection between work processes and the development of competencies and skills is essential from both an employer's and an employability standpoint, which includes both workplace and experiential training.

The organisational context and socio-ecocultural variation (Rozaimie, 2018; Rozaimie & Ali, 2014) had a significant impact on the effectiveness of applied competencies. To perform well in the workplace, we must be able to adapt to various work and sociocultural contexts. In the same vein, Petersen and Heikura (2010) proposed a framework for understanding employability skills and competency—especially related to the engineering field. Figure 1 depicts the Organisation, Knowledge, Environment, and Individual (OKEI) framework, where it suggests that expected competencies can be based on a combination of other competencies (Petersen & Heikura, 2010).

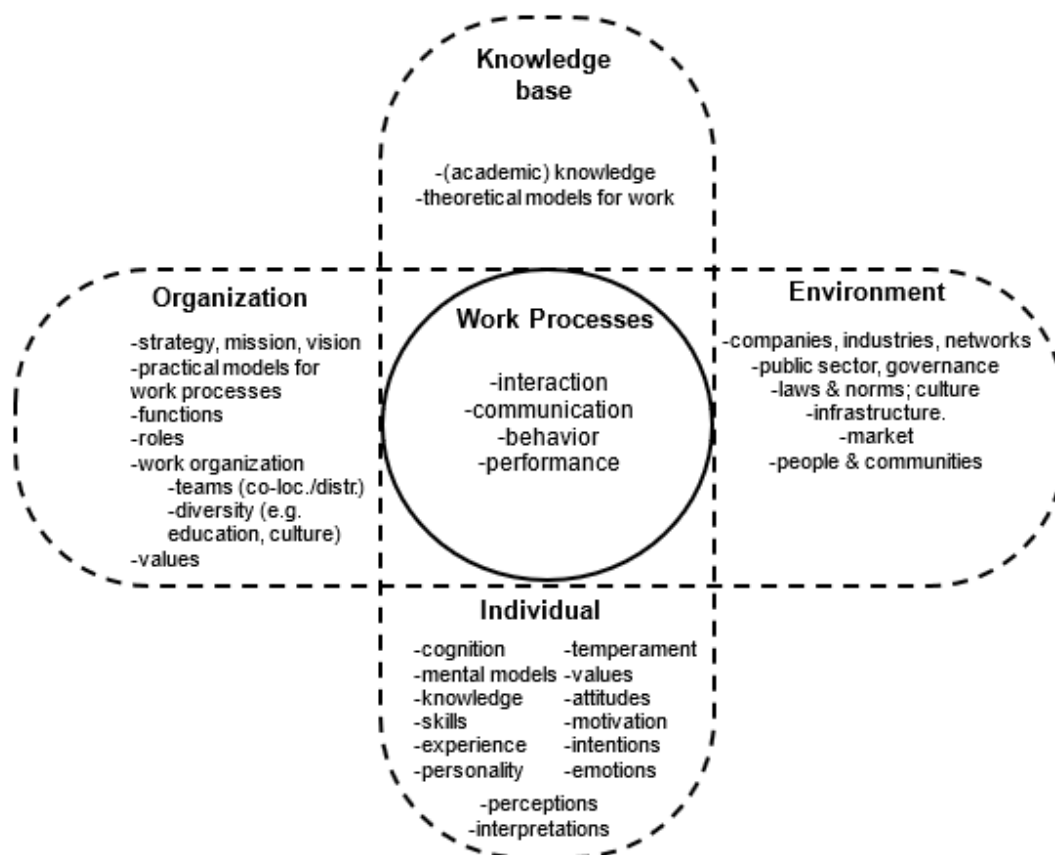


Figure 1. OKEI competence modelling framework

This OKEI competence modelling framework (Petersen & Heikura, 2010) was created to aid in rapid competence development through educational games by considering socio-environmental factors such as organisation, knowledge, environment, and individual applied in real-life situations to achieve expected learning outcomes. In particular, the competency is enculturated through the lens of applied knowledge at the micro (individual), meso (organisation), and macro (broader operational environment or society) levels. It is a multidirectional competence development process that is flexible and can be influenced by the

intensity of interpersonal interactions. Therefore, in addressing industry-graduate mismatch issues, HEIs must provide graduates with relevant knowledge and skills that meet industry needs. Employers, in fact, consider employability skills to be the most important (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023) and expect graduates to possess those competencies (Abas & Imam, 2016; Drange, Bernstrøm, & Mamelund, 2018; Petersen & Heikura, 2010). Kennedy, Hyland, and Ryan (2009) contended that competency undertaken behaviour (Washer, 2007) that combines knowledge, skills, and ability, whereas skills may be limited to the ability to cope with specific practical tasks. Thus, employability skills are the transferable skills required by an individual to become employable. Along with an outstanding technical understanding and subject knowledge, employers frequently specify a set of skills they expect from their employees. Employers expect graduates to demonstrate 'professional capability' in the workplace (Scott & Yates, 2002), which includes both academic and general employability skills. Although universities promote and conceptualise their students' graduate attributes at the institutional level, generic graduate attributes (Green, Hammer, & Star, 2009) are a deceptive concept because generic terms can mean something distinct across academic disciplines.

2.2 Global Employability and its Importance in Today's Workforce

Many researchers have concluded from their research that employers are more likely to recruit applicants with better soft skills rather than those with hard skills (Balaji & Somashekar, 2009; Fowler et al., 2013; Singh & Singh, 2008). Employers believe that they can instil and enhance the knowledge and technical skills of an employee, but it is very difficult to develop and teach soft skills. Hence, they tend to hire people with a wide range of employability skills rather than technical skills (Fowler et al., 2013; Singh & Singh, 2008), and employers argue that they "recruit for attitude and train for skill" (Rao, 2014). Sutton (2002) reported that employers use soft skills as "the no. 1 differentiator for job applications in all types of industries," as hard skills can help to get an interview, but soft skills are required to obtain and keep a job (Robles, 2012). Yang, Cheung, and Fang (2015) also testified that possession of employability skills increases the chances for successful employment. Additionally, Seth and Seth (2013) conveyed studies by the Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation on Fortune 500 CEOs that found that 75% of long-term job success depended on soft skills and only 25% on technical skills. According to a survey by Harvard University, 80% of career achievements are determined by soft skills and only 20% by hard skills (Seth & Seth, 2013). The importance of employability skills can be linked to the way organisations work in the modern age. The way jobs are designed in today's workplace requires people to interact with each other and work in teams to achieve their organisational goals (Seth & Seth, 2013).

Higher mobility is being observed as people not only move within the organisation to work in different geographical regions but also try to find new and challenging roles in search of better career opportunities. As a result of this, the knowledge and ability to use different languages, understanding of various cultures, and awareness of working with diverse work teams have become imperative (Ramadi, Ramadi & Nasr, 2015). Continuously changing technology demands workers to learn new software and systems and strive towards a lifelong learning attitude. The modern world is characterised by innovation, where companies are competing to bring innovative solutions to existing problems and introduce new products into the market. These rapid advances require solving problems with creativity and identifying new problems and creating solutions for them (Evans-Greenwood, O'Leary, & Williams, 2015). Hence, acquiring, practicing, and utilising employability skills (like team-working skills, innovative and critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills) have become vital to survive and succeed in the workplace.

Employers' expectations of graduate employees have shifted significantly in response to structural changes in job markets (Brown, 2003; Brown & Lauder, 2003). Employers want graduates with a wide range of skills and attributes, and those abilities are what make graduates employable for specific tasks. Academics and industry may define employability as a graduate's ability to obtain and maintain job performance while also making a tangible and immediate contribution to the organisation (Bennett, 2002; Harvey, 2000, 2001; Holmes, 2001). Graduates are frequently expected to have relevant work experience in order to reassure employers that they will hire a mature, dependent individual who can fit into the new work environment with less supervision and job training (Andrews & Higson, 2008). Graduates with a good degree may demonstrate significant cognitive ability to interpret knowledge while performing specific problem-solving tasks. According to Archer and Davison (2008), there seems to be little emphasis on HEIs' international rankings.

Moreover, employers are increasingly interested in applicants' general and personal or intellectual characteristics (such as communication, adaptability, willingness to learn, problem solving, and teamwork) rather than technical skills (Green, Hammer & Star, 2009; Gammie, Gammie, & Cargill, 2002; Harvey, 2000, 2001; Hesketh, 2003; Liston, 1998). This generic value of candidates is emphasised due to the increasing supply of graduates as a way for employers to distinguish candidates in order to hire the best staff with outstanding discipline-specific skills and knowledge (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Stevens & Campion, 1994; Warn & Tranter, 2001). The best staff also are expected to be independent and able to take

initiative and make an immediate contribution (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Bennett, 2002; Harvey, 2000, 2001; Holmes, 2001).

Internationally, the nature and extent of skill requirements differ by country (Succi & Canovi, 2019), sector (Bennett, 2002; Osmani et al., 2019), size, and market orientation (Archer & Davison, 2008). The academic dilemma of HEIs is observed to cause a skills deficit as a result of a failure to either teach the stated employability skills or teach students how to apply their skills in a workplace context, rather than defining the skills and attributes that their graduates should possess. Hence, the OECD has established the OECD Learning Compass 2030 to prepare future competitive and marketable graduates, which includes an evolving learning framework that outlines an aspirational vision for education's future. This learning compass supports education's overarching goals by providing points of orientation that include individual and collective well-being in future planning. Figure 2 depicts the framework's broad vision of what graduates will need to thrive in 2030 and beyond, including student agency, student well-being, and the different types of competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values) (OECD, 2024). Despite being globally informed, the learning compass could be locally contextualised.



Figure 2: The OECD Learning Compass 2030 (OECD 2024)

The OECD Learning Compass primarily encourages academic institutions to seek out competent teachers or other academics who can play an important role in delivering effective academic curricula and preparing future employees who are talented and capable of realising their full potential. In the era of digital technology as a medium for transmitting significant knowledge, rational teaching through coaching and mentoring remains a human capacity of enduring required value (Schleicher, 2018). Hence, the OECD recommends that academic institutions' curriculum analyses are shifting from 'curriculum redesign or revision' to 'curriculum implementation'. This curriculum shift is critical for aligning the academic curriculum, which includes pedagogies and assessments, with the changes in professional development (incorporating a symbiosis among academic institutions, policymakers, stakeholders, industry, and global peer learning).

In the same vein, Tomlinson (2017) provided a comprehensive framework that includes factors indicating graduate employability. Tomlinson's model articulates the learning

outcomes as comprising five capitals: human capital (incorporates the general and specific properties that are assumed to add immediate value to students' profiles), social capital (helps students capitalise on their human capital), cultural capital (formation of culturally valued knowledge, dispositions, and behaviours that help graduates represent themselves to organisations), identity capital (individuals invest in their occupation), and psychological capital (graduates' ability to cope with and adapt to difficulties on the job market conditions or setbacks) (Tomlison, 2017).

Tomlison's graduate employability model (Tomlison, 2017) is holistic in nature, demonstrating individual ability to interpret the job market and search for opportunities, build a network of career contacts, demonstrate sensitivity to different cultural contexts, self-evaluate one's motivations and 'fit' for roles and opportunities, and construct career contingency plans. As a result, one of the most significant challenges for HEIs is to embrace an explicit perspective that defines graduate employability in terms of career-focused competencies. This enactment applies to the process of obtaining, retaining, and regaining graduate-level jobs as needed. These challenges will be addressed in the following sections, with a focus on Malaysian graduates' global employability.

2.3 Internationalisation at Home (IaH) and Global Employability

IaH is an approach to the internationalisation of higher education that looks beyond the international mobility of a minority number of students, emphasising instead the delivery to all students of an internationally focused curriculum and the embedding of intercultural communication in culturally diverse settings (Wächter, 2003). However, it is a broad term, which requires contextualising to be made concrete and meaningful, and has been implemented in regionally distinct ways across the United Kingdom, Northern Europe, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Nilsson (2003) defined IaH simply as "any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student mobility" (p. 31). Approaches to IaH, for example, from the Netherlands Universities' Foundation for International Co-Operation emphasised as more skill-based, focused on providing students with a combination of "international competencies" (those relevant to interaction with people from other countries) and "intercultural competencies," defined as "social skills and forms of behaviour relevant to interaction with people from other cultures" (De Wit, 2010, p. 2).

The priority of IaH was embedding global mindfulness into an internationalised curriculum. However, Killick (2017) identified that it could equally benefit from application in

practice as part of an “extended curriculum,” including volunteering and global citizen awards, whereas Knight (2008) noted that the “at home” concept gives greater prominence to the use of “extracurricular activities, relationships with local cultural and ethnic community groups, as well as the integration of foreign students and scholars into campus life and activities”. Second, out of the ten drivers for internationalisation suggested by Green (2012), is to prepare students for the global workforce.

Knight (2008) noted that one way of achieving this is via the “involvement of students in local cultural and ethnic organisations through internships, placements, and applied research”. A link between employability and internationalisation seems clear. Beelen (2011) has identified that the most important rationale for internationalisation at the HEIs is to enhance student “preparedness” for a globalised world. British Council (2013) and Think Global (2011) published research on the importance of intercultural skills to employers and on the gap between employers’ need for globally prepared recruits and the capacities of current U.K. school leavers and graduates. The Erasmus Impact Study (Brandenburg, Berghoff, & Taboadela, 2014) found that 92% of employers surveyed were looking for “transversal skills” including openness and curiosity, confidence, and tolerance toward other values and behaviours, and that study abroad helped 81% of Erasmus students to improve these skills. Killick (2017) emphasised the importance of global graduates of “cultural dexterity”—the ability to be sensitive to the culture of others without imposing one’s own. Delineate from the above, this paper proposes the IaH and global employability as follows:

Proposition 1: Internationalisation at Home (IaH) has a positive effect on the Malaysian graduates' global employability.

2.4 Intercultural Competence and Global Employability

A range of studies has been undertaken on the definition of ‘intercultural competence’ and the skills of which it consists of. Deardorff and Jones (2012) listed some of these and highlighted the variety of terms that appear to be interchangeable in describing the broad concept, including ‘cross-cultural capability’, ‘intercultural sensitivity’, and ‘cultural fluency’. Mentioned earlier, Tomlinson’s approach (Tomlinson, 2017) identifies five capitals (human, social, cultural, identity, and psychological) that influence graduates’ ability to compete in the global labour market. Thus, this article envisions the five competitive capitals as the cornerstone of ‘intercultural competency’ enabling graduates to compete globally. Scholars (Freeman et al., 2009) described intercultural competence as “a dynamic, ongoing, interactive self-reflective

learning process that transforms attitudes, skills, and knowledge for effective and appropriate communication and interaction across cultures." It is not about specific knowledge of a single culture but means operating effectively across cultures and challenging our own values, assumptions, and stereotypes (Jones, 2011). It can help to deliver a key function of higher education: 'to produce graduates capable of solving problems in a variety of locations with cultural and environmental sensitivity' (Aulakh et al., 1997).

Barker and Mak (2013) and Jones (2016) stressed an important part of developing intercultural competence: the need for students to build confidence by learning to adapt to encounters beyond their comfort zone, by being confronted with "disorienting dilemmas" (Mezirow, 1991) associated with communicating across potential barriers of not just nationality and culture, but race, gender, class, or other forms of power. These notions are finding increasing resonance across higher education with the recognition that the intercultural competence required to operate effectively in global contexts is equally important for living and working in our increasingly diverse and multicultural local communities. As this diversity is reflected on campuses around the world, both through internationally mobile students and diverse local student populations, multicultural classrooms become a resource to be used purposefully to help develop intercultural skills for all students. Delineate from the above, this paper proposes the intercultural competency and global employability as follows:

Proposition 2: Intercultural competence has a positive effect on the Malaysian graduates' global employability.

2.5 Global Citizenship and Global Employability

Graduates, being active members of a society and nation, have a responsibility to contribute to the global issues and make efforts for the solution. For this, global citizenship needs to develop among students to develop a sense of belonging to the global community. We have witnessed how the pandemic COVID-19 has changed the global labour landscape into the use of digital and social mediums in global communication. Hence, Global Citizenship promises to boost graduates' worldwide employability by developing essential vital skills required by today's economy in an age of rapid information exchange. Given the increasing globalisation of the labour market for graduates, institutions must prioritise global citizenship in order to produce holistically global graduates.

Global citizenship refers to individuals' and communities' social, environmental, and economic acts that acknowledge that everyone is a global citizen as defined by the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI, 2024). It is about living equality, where decisions made in one location can have an impact on other elements of life on Earth, where we all share a shared humanity and are of equal value. Particularly, openness and positive engagement with various identities and cultures promote harmony of life and the ability to detect and fight preconceptions. The fair distribution of the earth's resources and the protection of all human rights should become a priority for the living. The United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) emphasised that encouraging global citizenship in sustainable development will enable individuals to accept their social obligation to act in the best interests of all societies, not just their own. The concept of global citizenship is interwoven in the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 4, i.e., ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning (UNAI, 2024).

The curriculum shifts in higher education to emphasise global citizenship as a learning outcome can effectively prepare globally competent students and equip future professionals to contribute meaningfully to academic and professional achievement. According to Belabcir (2024), English Language Teaching (ELT) appears to be a crucial means of empowering students' leadership and global citizenship skills, hence facilitating their holistic development of employable skills. Graduates must therefore develop leadership and global citizenship abilities in order to improve their creativity, productivity, and sustainability in the workplace.

Scholars (Radclyffe-Thomas et al., 2018) argued that giving legitimate work practices provides graduates with effective exposure and a chance to be introduced into the competitive employment market setting to demonstrate their individual skills. Thus, international educational collaborations that have proven successful can be organised with an emphasis on shared understandings of global citizenship and employment opportunities. Undeniable, global citizenship is the idea that one's identity transcends geography or political borders, and that responsibilities or rights are derived from membership in a broader class. Global citizens are aware of and understand the wider world—and their place in it. They take an active role in their community and work with others to make our planet more equal, fair, and sustainable. In the context of graduate employability, global citizenship is of high importance as it brings global awareness, efficacy, and tolerance among graduates, which enables them to perform well in the diverse culture and with people of distinct backgrounds. Delineate from the above, this paper proposes global citizenship and global employability as follows:

Proposition 3: Global citizenship has a positive effect on the Malaysian graduates' global employability.

2.6 Institutional support towards global employability

As previously mentioned, internationalisation and the establishment of an ideal graduate quality modal towards competitive and global employability are critical without institutional support. Institutional support, in general, refers to the organisational system, financing, human resources, institution-wide services, and campus culture that are offered for foreign activities, whether ad hoc or on a continuous basis. In the academic environment, institutional support in this paper refers to university and education administration assistance for nurturing and valuing contributions. Obviously, institutional support refers to the assistance offered by institutions in developing and implementing an international strategy that benefits students and international, intercultural, and global education. This type of support will help to generate career-ready graduates with a global mindset.

Prior studies (Alam, Ogawa, & Islam, 2022; Rahman et al., 2022) stated that sustainable mechanisms and institutional assistance are required to address the employment issue. Graduates may confront numerous challenges in achieving the ideal employability, competency, and skill development. Consequentially, as stated in the OECD Learning Compass 2030, the government and stakeholders in relevant HEIs must collaborate to overcome barriers to preparing future competitive and marketable graduates. Institutional support is an important aspect of learning persistence and outcomes (Kennedy, Hyland, & Ryan, 2009), since it determines the quality and competences of an ideal graduate. Scholars (Jones, 2013, 2016; Jackling & De Lange, 2009; Rahman et al., 2022) stated that institutional support consists of a favourable educational environment, support from colleagues and supervisors, and a positive institutional learning environment. It is vital to create a favourable educational atmosphere in which teachers and students can achieve intercultural, global, and international learning objectives.

Within HEIs, educational support is a critical component that adds value to academic training and positively correlates with students' learning outcomes (Knight, 2008). Similarly, colleagues provide peer support during the learning process and underlie the implementation of such learning in the workplace (Humburg, 2014; Minten & Forsyth, 2014). Furthermore, institutional climate refers to characteristics such as behavioural patterns, common beliefs, living structures, and cultural values that can influence the behaviour of individuals or groups

(Seth & Seth, 2013). Thus, institutional support is the collaborative effort of all stakeholders that results in excellent learning outcomes at HEIs (Kennedy, Hyland, & Ryan, 2009; Robles, 2012). Individuals who feel supported by their institutions are more likely to be confident in achieving their goals. As a result, strong institutional support will amplify the impact of internationalisation at home, intercultural competence, and global citizenship on the global employability of graduates. Delineate from the above, this paper proposes the institutional support and global employability as follows:

Proposition 4: Institutional support does enhance the positive relationship between internationalisation at Home (IaH), intercultural competence, global citizenship, and global employability.

3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

To unravel graduates' global employability issues and positioning into a competitive international workforce, this paper reviews scholarly studies utilising a thematic inquiry. Our review and issues propositions method were based on that used by the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2009). This method entails conducting a systematic examination of specific databases using a variety of strategies, including keywords and subject headings. It enables the integration of quantitative data across studies with similar outcome measures, as well as the summary of findings when methods are used variously.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Responding to the Malaysia Critical Occupations List (MyCOL), which exposes a skills gap, particularly among Malaysian graduates, this study proposes an idealistic perspective to create a future competitive graduate. Scholarly publications previously reviewed provide a thorough grasp of how Internationalisation at Home (IaH), intercultural competency, global citizenship, and institutional assistance are said to contribute to graduates' global employability. As shown in Figure 3 as follows, this paper proposes a global employability paradigm with three latent independent variables: internationalisation at home (IaH), intercultural competence, and global citizenship. On the other hand, the latent dependent variable is thought to be global employability, particularly among Malaysian graduates. Furthermore, the additional argument stated in this paper coined the moderating effects of institutional support on the relationship between domestic internationalisation, intercultural competence, global citizenship, and employability.

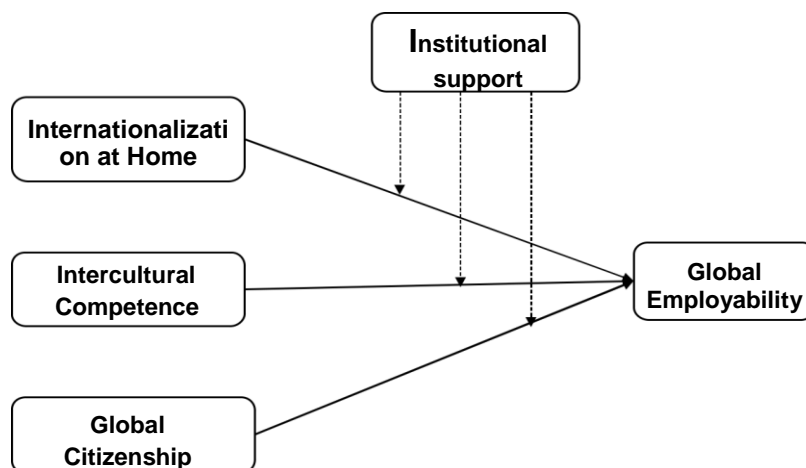


Figure 3. Proposed Global Employability Paradigm

First, global employability in an atmosphere of major changes in the labour market requires a competitive and flexible attitude to the worldwide environment. According to researchers, a competent graduate is developed through intercultural collaboration and synergy between HEIs and stakeholders around the world (Isomöttönen et al., 2019; Van Gaalen & Gielesen, 2014). Furthermore, the idealistic graduate employability modal, inspired by the OECD Learning Compass 2030 (OECD, 2024), ideally includes four competencies: core academic competencies, occupational context, personal and social capabilities, and career knowledge and transition skills (Evans-Greenwood, O'Leary, & Williams, 2015; Coi et al., 2007).

Second, to prepare competent graduates, the internationalisation process should begin at home by exposing students to curriculum that reflects the realities of the work market. Scholars (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Chan & Lin, 2015; Jones, 2013, 2016; Lambert, 1987; Soria & Troisi, 2014) emphasised the importance of HEIs providing opportunities for experiential learning in an intercultural context, pushing people outside of their comfort zones in addition to theoretical knowledge. Thus, to close the graduate skills gap, HEIs have to make a paradigm shift in their academic program.

Third, in addition to the theoretical and practical academic knowledge gained from their tertiary qualifications, graduates are expected to possess essential dynamic soft skills required by the disruptive job market (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2010; Parks, Williamson & Gardner, 2011; Turner & Mulholland, 2017; Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023). Competitive global players must be able to demonstrate significant cross-cultural skill (Barker & Mak, 2013; Hinchliffe & Jolly

2011) as well as rational, emotional, attitudinal, and aptitude intelligence (Abas & Imam, 2016; Alam, Ogawa, & Islam, 2022; Andrews, & Higson, 2008; Jingura & Kamusoko, 2019; Vashisht, Pandey, & Pathak, 2016) in order to deliver the job and solve problems effectively and efficiently. Due to the differences in the socio-cultural environment around the globe, intercultural competencies require graduates to be interculturally intelligent to possess relevant personality traits and employability skills to meet the ever-changing demands of work (Messum et al., 2017; Rozaimie, 2018; Rozaimie & Ali, 2014). Thus, HEIs' learning outcomes expected graduates to understand the reality of market instability and be globally relevant.

Fourth, while addressing the dynamism of global job needs, cognitively address attitudinal stability to provide suitable working behaviour. As previously noted, the nature and scope of skill requirements vary by country and socio-cultural milieu, depending on market size, area, and other factors (Archer & Davison, 2008; Bennett, 2002; Osmani et al., 2019; Succi & Canovi, 2019). Thus, global citizenship is related to the concept of addressing HEIs' academic challenge by empowering graduates with expected employability knowledge, skills, and experience, with the global employability requirement contextualised locally. To reduce intercultural adjustment failure, graduates must recognise that everyone is a global citizen and accept their social responsibility to act in the best interests of all societies accordingly to the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI, 2024). Addressing the United Nations's SDG 4, which is ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning, is about living equality, shared humanity, equal value, and fair distribution of the earth's resources, as well as the protection of all human rights, which should become a priority in preparing future competitive graduates for global employment.

Finally, inspired by the OKEI competency modelling framework (Petersen & Heikura, 2010) and the OECD Learning Compass 2030 (OECD, 2024), the role of HEIs is challenged to educate future competitive and marketable graduates. To promote individual and community well-being, HEIs must aid that includes an expanding learning framework. As a result, HEIs should embrace a comprehensive vision that includes student agency, student well-being, various forms of competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values), and the socio-environmental symbiosis. HEIs are supposed to serve as a training ground for competent graduates and employable individuals (Ciarocco & Strohmets, 2018; Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023; Suleman, 2021; Cassidy, 2017). Scholars (Abas & Imam, 2016; Brown & Lauder, 2003; Drange, Bernstrøm, & Mamelund, 2018; Scott & Yates, 2002) have argued that it is the responsibility of HEIs to provide graduates with relevant knowledge and skills, as well

as the ability to demonstrate 'professional capability' in the workplace, in order to meet industry needs.

To address future global employment difficulties, Malaysia's government has announced a number of efforts to help graduates find work, including employer engagement and career Services (EECS) program head by Malaysian TalentCorp and digital skills development for graduates (Nurnaddia & Nurhaiza, 2023). Despite these hurdles, graduates are expected to take the most proactive steps towards developing in-demand skills such as digital literacy, data analysis, and project management. Mutual worldwide professional networking within graduates' academic degree domains, as well as the development of a strong online presence, could help to increase global employability. Thus, future research is needed to offer empirical evidence for the global employability paradigm presented in this work. To summarise, Internationalisation at Home (IaH), intercultural competency, global citizenship, and perceived institutional support all contribute to graduates' globally employability in terms of cultural, sociopolitical, and economic harmonisation.

4.0 CONCLUSION

"To be employed or not to be employed by others" is undoubtedly the most pressing question that graduates face upon graduation. Graduates who do not want to work for someone else can take the initiative to establish their own business. However, regardless of what the graduates choose to do after graduation, they must prepare to confront the world. To live comfortably, they must work. While studying at a higher education institution, graduates must improve themselves in a variety of ways, including becoming internationalised graduates with high intercultural competence and a global citizenship mindset in order to find work, either locally or globally.

Despite priming the optimal framework for globally competent graduates, this article suggests that HEIs focus on students' international aspects, cultural orientation, and global-mindedness participation, which may lead to increased employability globally. Thus, graduates' marketability is significantly enhanced by the role of internationalisation at home, intercultural competence, global citizenship, and institutional support, which all contribute to improved global employability, especially among Malaysian graduates.

To summarise, graduate global employability is a complex issue influenced by a number of factors, including a mismatch between education and the labour market, an oversupply of

graduates in some professions, and increased rivalry for jobs. Mutual symbiosis between HEIs, stakeholders, and the government helps to alleviate the global digital economy by educating graduates to be more marketable for global jobs based on their talents and academic background, and vice versa.

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