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# EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF THE GRADUATES IN FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCES IN SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITIES

P.A.A.U. Jothirathne

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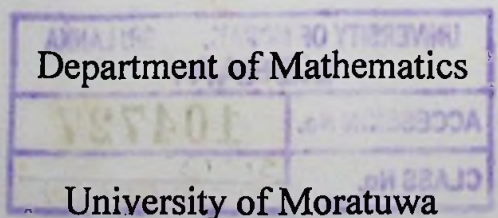
Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
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## DECLARATION OF THE CANDIDATE

“I declare that this is my own work and this dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a Degree or Diploma in any University or other institute of higher learning and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgement is made in the text”

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is especially dedicated to my family.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis was completed in the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Kuliypitiya and is a part of a M.Sc. Degree in Operational Research in the University of Moratuwa. It would not have been completed successfully without many dedicated individuals who have offered me great support and assistance, both professional and personal.

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P.A.A.U. jothirathne

## **ABSTRACT**

The Research study was carried out with the aim of identify the employability skills development in graduates in Faculty of Applied Sciences. To achieve the objectives a model of employability was introduced that can be used as a framework for working with undergraduates to develop their employability, identify the perception of employers concerning the employability skills of graduates, and graduates' perception of the employability skills that they possessed. The model was developed based on existing research on employability skills and experience of the author. Inclusion of the various factors to the model was also discussed and justified using existing research work. The developed employability model consists of three principal variables namely; personal skills, core skills and process skills. For each principal variable, sub variables were identified and there were 16 sub variables in the model.

Due to the time limitation instead of longitudinal research, the study employed a comparative study of two cross sectional samples of first year and final year undergraduates from four universities. Size of the sample was 670 undergraduates and 110 employers. The study adopted a survey method and data were collected through two sets of questionnaires with the aim of gauging undergraduates' and employers' perceptions on employability skills possession of applied science graduates.

The Results of this study revealed by being at the university, graduates developed employability skills that are required to gain the employment. Furthermore, personal skills are developed most at the university and process skills were the least developed skills. The study disclosed the difference between employers and undergraduates' perception for all 16 employability skills, where employer rated graduates much lower than that of undergraduates. The results of the study also suggested that with different age groups of employers the perception relating to the possession of employability skills of graduates tend to differ. It is recommended the developed model of employability to be applied for other graduates. Some recommendations and suggestions for future research were highlighted.

**Key words:** Employability Skills, Employers, Graduates, Perception, Undergraduates

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organization
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
YEN	Youth Employment Network
NAP	National Action Plan
GEI	Graduate Employability Indicators
ALTC	Australian Learning and Teaching Council
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
K-S	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test
S-W	Shapiro-Wilk Test
MWW	Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon
UN	United Nation