



The relations of employability skills to career adaptability among technical school students



Allan B. de Guzman ^{a,*}, Kyoung Ok Choi ^b

^a Room 211 Thomas Aquinas Research Complex, University of Santo Tomas, España, Manila 1015, Philippines

^b Caritas Sisters of Jesus, Seoul Province, South Korea

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ABSTRACT

This two pronged study reports the initial validation of the psychometric properties and factor structure of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) in the context of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the investigation of the relationship between employability skills and career adaptability. Results of the study revealed that CAAS can be a valid and useful measurement for assessing career adaptability in the context of Papua New Guinea. Via canonical correlation analysis (CCA), significant relations between career adaptability and employability skills were observed. Notably, team work skills were significantly related to the four sub-scales of career adaptability. This study serves as a clarion to educators and policy makers in PNG by providing a richer view on the career adaptability and employability skills as well, thus calling for integrated efforts to contribute to career development and practice in the context of PNG.

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1. Introduction

A core component of successful career preparation in adolescence is the development of career adaptability (Savickas, 1997). Similarly, the potential of employability skills has been argued for increasing work-related outcomes and helping people adapting with changes and improving career opportunities in the workplace (Mohd Yusof, Mustapha, Syed Mohamad, & Bunian, 2012). By and large, today's employers demand new and different types of skills from their workers than they were in the past as a result of technological advances and globalization (Cinar, Dongel, & Sogutlu, 2009). In other words, the current workplaces require workers with high technical skills coupled with well-developed employability skills (Singh & Singh, 2008).

Employability skills refer to general and nontechnical competencies required for performing all jobs, regardless of types or levels of jobs (Ju, Zhang, & Pacha, 2012), which are identified to be the most critical skills in the current global job market (Ministry of Higher Education & Malaysia, 2006). They are "skills which cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer" (Sherer & Eadie, 1987, p. 16). As globalization has tightened the availability of jobs, particularly for adolescents and young adults (Bynner, 2001; Danziger & Ratner, 2010; Gutman & Schoon, 2012), employability skills need to be taught by schools so that students are better prepared for successful employment (Cotton, 2008; Poole & Zahn, 1993). According to Cranmer (2006), there is a mismatch between the skills acquired at school and the skills needed in employment. Consequently, young adults entering the skilled and semi-skilled labor market segments are more prone to take up what is available than to choose jobs (Robert, 1977). Likewise, they experience a mismatch between themselves and their jobs to varying degrees during the course of their career (Takase, Nakayoshi, & Teraoka, 2012). Despite the increase access to education and jobs, individuals will still undergo multiple career transitions that they will face during the course of their work lives, thus involving them in explorative and developmental activities that may or may not build on earlier work experience (Savickas et al., 2009). Since it has been proven that employability skills are important in helping people adapting with changes and improve

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: abdeguzman@mnl.ust.edu.ph, doc_allan@yahoo.com (A.B. de Guzman), beautymaza@yahoo.com (K.O. Choi).

career opportunities in the workplace (Rasul, Ismail, Isamil, Rajuddin, & Abd Rauf, 2010), it can be postulated that employability skills are positively correlated to career adaptability. Interestingly, to the best of our knowledge, no study has yet investigated the relationship between employability skills and career adaptability.

Taken together, it is a particularly pertinent time to explore a comprehensive understanding of relationships among variables of employability skills and career adaptability. The first goal of this study was to validate the career adapt-abilities scale (CAAS)-international form in the context of Papua New Guinea involving female senior students and graduates from a technical secondary school. The present study further attempted to investigate the correlation between employability skills and career adaptability by employing canonical correlation analysis (CCA). Based on the research background and motivations that explore if meaningful relationships exist between employability skills and career adaptability, the following questions describe the objectives of this study: (1) Does a noteworthy relationship exist between a set of employability skills and a set of career adaptability? (2) What variables are contributing to this relationship between the variable sets across the three functions? Driven by these research questions, we developed our model. The proposed model is illustrated in Fig. 1.

2. Literature review

2.1. Career adaptability

Career adaptability is a psychosocial construct that denotes the resources individuals need to successfully manage current and anticipated career transitions (Savickas, 1997, 2005). In career construction theory, adaptability resources help to form the strategies that individuals use to direct their adaptive behaviors. That is, these resources serve as self-regulation strategies or strengths that enable individuals to broaden, refine and eventually implement their self-concepts in occupational roles, thereby creating their work lives and building their careers. Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004) also conceptualized personal adaptability as a component of their psychosocial construct of employability, referring to optimism, propensity to learn, openness, internal locus of control, and generalized self-efficacy. Since today's post-industrial society no longer guarantees ordered and sequential career demands to adolescents or adults (Nota, Ginevra, & Soresi, 2012), individuals are now more likely to change jobs frequently either by choice or by necessity in light of a struggling work economy (Rossier, Zecca, Stauffer, Maggiori, & Dauwalder, 2012). In this circumstance, individuals need to have skills that allow them to quickly adapt to a variety of situations and to cope with more frequent work transitions. Career adaptability provides a framework for attending to how individuals view their futures and supports interventions based on their needs (Rottinghaus, Buelow, Matyja, & Schneider, 2012). Consequently, career adaptability can enhance the chance on finding a suitable job, thereby enhancing career success and even well-being (Hartung & Taber, 2008; Hirschi, 2010; Skorikov, 2007). In sum, career adaptability resources should be viewed as self-regulatory, psychosocial competencies that shape adaptive strategies and actions aimed at achieving adaptation goals.

It comprises four psychosocial resources or transactional competencies. Concern consists in the ability to be aware of and to plan for a vocational future; control reflects the subjective feeling of self-governing and decisiveness concerning a vocational future; curiosity is defined as the tendency to explore one's environment; and, finally, confidence is the tendency to feel self-efficacious concerning the ability to solve concrete career problems. As such, adaptability and its components are conceived as resources or abilities allowing people help to manage career transitions.

2.2. Employability skills

Employability skills, as simply defined by Robinson (2000), refer to those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. According to DEST (2002), Employability skills include communication, teamwork, problem solving, self-management, planning and organizing, technology, life-long learning, and enterprise skills. They are also known by several other names, including key skills, core skills, life skills, essential skills, key competencies, generic skills, 21st century skills, necessary skills, and transferable skills. However, industry's preferred term is employability skills (The Allen Consulting Group, 2006). According to McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, and Hall (2007), employable individuals take a proactive approach to engage in the labor market. Morrison and Hall (2002) also found that employability likely facilitates movement between jobs both within and between organizations. As such, employability skill could assist employees to adjust themselves towards various changes and to increase working abilities which suit the working environmental needs (Kazilan, Hamzah, & Baker, 2009).

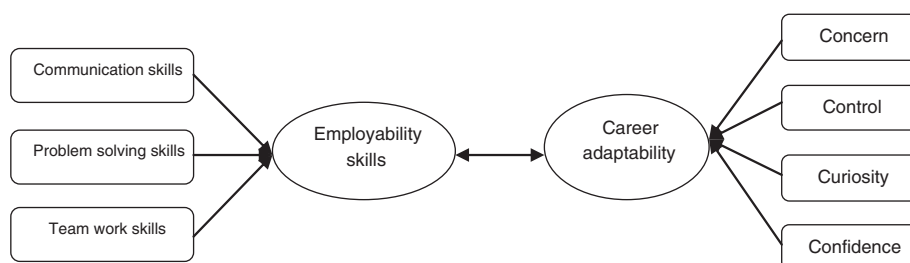


Fig. 1. Proposed model.

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