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EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF FRESH GRADUATES: VIEWS OF MANAGERS OF NON-STATE DEGREE AWARDING INSTITUTIONS IN COLOMBO DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

It has been observed that majority of fresh graduates in Sri Lanka have been unemployed or underemployed in past years. According to fresh graduates' perspective, required skills and qualifications to obtain employment are presents but still are being overlooked by organisations. Aforementioned facts are an indication that there is a disparity between expectancy of the recruiter and employability skills of fresh the graduate and being addressed as the key knowledge gap of the research paper. The main objective of this research was to find the expected employability skills of fresh graduates and employment opportunities exist from managers' perspective. Study has focused on areas to be improved by fresh graduates in Sri Lanka who are expecting to obtain employability in higher education sector and to make recommendations based on the recruiters' perspective. The study was conducted based on KSA model and personal traits of fresh graduates. The study has been designed with the epistemological standpoint of positivism and with a deductive approach. The study was conducted using experienced managerial level staff comprising 51 from selected non state degree awarding institutions in Colombo district. Data has been collected through a structured questionnaire and quantitative methods were utilised. The study revealed that managers' expectations are high on fresh graduates'

knowledge, Skills, Attitude and Personality Traits in recruitment than what fresh graduates perceived. Further, the findings demonstrated that recruiters' expectations are higher in more specific areas under KSA factors and Personality traits which led to fresh graduates' un-employability in the Sri Lankan context.

Keywords: KSA model, Personal Traits, recruitment, Fresh graduates, Recruiters, employability.

INTRODUCTION

The modern era started with the concept of knowledge society which induce the development of country with the support of knowledge. Further, literacy level and education are non-avoidable requirements in any country. There is an importance of education sector existence in a country and a special attention draws towards the higher education sector. Sri Lankan government has granted non-state degree awarding institutions to support fulfilling the demand of higher education requirements of the country (CBSL, 2018). The findings further, accentuate the employment opportunities in the higher education sector to serve the higher education requirements of the country (Wijesiri ,2018). Despite, state universities and non-state degree awarding institutions effectuate the higher education requirements of the country, fresh graduates pressurized due to

unemployment and underemployment which is a common phenomenon in Sri Lanka since 1960s (Wimalasiri, 2015). The news disclosed that fresh graduates in Sri Lanka started demanding the government to provide them with an appropriate solution for unemployment by protesting. It has become a persistent socio-economic issue in Sri Lanka (Sittampalam, 2019). This further, depicts the frustration, de-motivation, and depression of fresh graduates in seeking employment.

Among various factors, one impetus behind the unemployment has recognized as fresh graduates are unable to armed with the matched skills and qualifications for the requirements of the job market which confirmed by the public and private sector professionals in Sri Lanka (Wijesiri, 2018). Antecedent discovers manifest that fresh graduates' competency has divergence with recruiters' anticipation which addressed as the key knowledge gap of this research paper. The main objective of this study was to identify the expected employability skills of fresh graduates and employment opportunities exist from employers' perspective. The study emphasis the requirement of improving the focused competency areas of fresh graduates who anticipates being recruited to the higher education sector in Sri Lanka. The study mainly focused on the competency areas identified in KSA model (Reh, 2019) and personal traits of fresh graduates which highlights the level of competency expectations from recruiters' perception in non-state degree awarding institutes in Colombo district.

The main objective supplemented by the research objectives developed, based on to find expected requirement of knowledge, skills, attitude, and personal traits of fresh graduates in job recruitment. The study recommendations followed by the results of data analysis conducted for quantitative research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Employability and competency requirement of fresh graduates

There are different definitions provided for employability from divergent perspectives of authors. According to Bernston (2008), employability is fresh graduate obtains an initial job based on the competencies and ability to apply the knowledge gained through education system in job environment. Employability further described as achieving job requirements of the organization by continuing employment and manage conversion between job and role of the same organization. The factors or the competencies are identified by various authors which effect on the employability. According to the findings of Chandrakumara (2014), it shows that employability of a fresh graduate is not solely depend on soft skills of the fresh graduates but study confirmed that socio economic background, difference between the degree of the fresh graduates, and professional qualifications have influence towards the employability of fresh graduate. According to the findings of Kumara at. el (2017), which conducted on management graduates in Sri Lanka it shows that having a degree, work experience and English proficiency factors are prominent factors which influence the employability of graduates. Research conducted by Fonseka at. el (2015), has covered all the industries in Sri Lanka to understand the perspective of recruiter in recruiting fresh graduates and has identified that workplace skills, applied knowledge, people Skills and personal skills of the graduates have effect towards employability. With reference to the study findings of Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), it shows that the employability of graduate could change due to fresh graduate's problem solving, self-confidence, and teamwork. The same study has extended to identify the

variation of identified factors based on the gender and it proved that there are variations of possessing above mentioned employability skills by male and female from employer perspective too.

According to Gunawardana (2017), fit to any employment, the knowledge of academic discipline will not ponder as a standalone requirement but it is required to consider the factors which are, communication, management skills, computer literacy, general knowledge, teamwork and experiences. Further, the same article presented there is a major difficulty which employer facing when recruiting fresh graduates who has knowledge, skills and attitudes that comply with the requirements of the job position. There is wealth of attributes defined by Dacre and Sewell (2007) which a fresh graduate requires to find employment as work experience, skills and knowledge, extracurricular activities, technical expertise, and career development skills. Study results of Andrew and Higson (2008) proves fresh graduates work experience, business related knowledge, skills and soft skills and competencies relating to business considered when making the recruitment decisions by the recruiter. According to Saunders and Zuzel (2010), employers rank the fresh graduate who prove technical competences than the personal skills where as Blom and Saeki (2011) have identified that employer perceives soft skills which highlighted as core employability skills and communication skills are important when hire a fresh graduate. Similar idea presented by Mason et al. (2006), which emphasized fresh graduate can enable the productivity of the organization by posing skills, knowledge, attitude, and commercial understanding. aforementioned factors prove a closer relationship between knowledge, skills, attitude, and personal traits of fresh graduate on employability which each

competency has further viewed in depth by different researches.

Knowledge competency requirement of fresh graduate and employability

In education sector a fresh graduate is needed to possess theoretical and practical knowledge which further needs to be frequently updated. In the forum of ISOS and Westat (2010), explained the importance of knowledge of a fresh graduate to obtain a suitable job and has discussed the knowledge factors which need to be improved as proper understanding about organization, process, product, solutions and services. According to Rowley (2000), research findings it shows education sector is a focal point which knowledge creation, dissemination and leaning happens frequently.

There are two types of knowledge such as tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge which is important to possess by a graduate who seeks a job in higher education sector. In connection with the findings of Hall et al. (2009), employer expects fresh graduates to have wider knowledge in subject area, implications of knowledge, how knowledge shapes market and knowing where the company positioned in the sector. It shows that knowledge and general academic skills has a strong relationship which employers consider the specific knowledge and practical knowledge of using the theoretical knowledge is important when selecting an employee (De Vries et al., 2014). According to the findings of Higgs (2007), a lecturer must be a reflective practitioner to deliver the lectures effectively and therefore it is important to improve the knowledge of a lecturer through ongoing reflective practices which will be benefited for students that vast area will be taught and will impact on the theory what going to deliver in the lecture.

According to the above fact its emphasis the knowledge of the lecturer

must be improved and important of posing knowledge by fresh graduate in non-state degree awarding institutes grow in the lecturer position. In non-state degree awarding institutes not just prioritize the job position of lecturer but fresh graduates who willing to hold other job positions need the knowledge which highlighted in the article published by Duignan and Macpherson (1992), as knowledge is important for making decisions in the university, problem solving and provide appropriate leadership by emphasizing that they are well educated. This weight the requirement of knowledge in performing other activities in the non-state degree awarding institutes. Findings of Saunders and Zuzel (2015), it showed that most of the recruitment companies have defined that commercial knowledge as a requirement of graduates where it is more into job-oriented perspective and graduates who got this knowledge will get more benefits during the selection process.

The facts discovered by Ariyawansa and Perera (2005), pointed that English proficiency has considered as critical determinant of graduate employability in Sri Lankan context which emphasized that language proficiency in multi-language is preferable in employability. Referring to the findings of Saunders and Zuzel (2010) that emphasized a graduate must possess in-depth knowledge, understanding and discipline in subject knowledge gain more advantages in recruitment process. According to the research findings of Shalem and Slonimsky (2014), it is important for a teacher to have practical knowledge or how to use the theoretical knowledge in real situation to teach to students. Further, it confirmed that the lecturers who possess practical knowledge can easily transfer tacit knowledge with explicit knowledge.

Skills competency requirement of fresh graduate and employability

In education sector it is vital to use different skills as a lecturer that mainly

impact on job performance. According to the findings it shows that skills of a fresh graduate has consider as a main requirement to be fulfilled to enter to employability. The skills classified as communication, team working, self-management, problem solving, self-awareness and analysis which a fresh graduate should possess to obtain a job in education sector (AAGE, 2012). When look into the point elaborated by Pegg et al. (2012) to evolve in the working environment and to get employed in higher education sector a fresh graduate should have the skills of, problem solving, self-aware, team working, self-manage, problem solving, analytical, accountable, ethical, confident and communication. If fresh graduate is seeking an employment in manufacturing area it is important to be satisfied thinking skills, system and technology skills, personal qualities, basic skills, and resource skills of recruiter (Rasul & Puvanasvaran, 2009). Correspondingly with the findings of Omar et al. (2010), that depicts personal attributes such as personal skills and knowledge are highly considered by the employers when recruiting a fresh graduate.

There is a contradict on the findings of Rasul and Puvanasvaran and Omar et al. compared to the findings of Alston et al. (2009) which the study shows in addition to the technical skills it is important for fresh graduates to possess decision making, technology problem solving, management and communication skills to obtain a job. The article published by Willimas (2018), under education, career and business has referred to the research results produced by National Association of College and Employer in 2016 to identify that employers seeks the communication skills from fresh graduates in recruitment.

The study conducted by Plantilla (2017) depicted that there is high importance of considering the teamwork skills of

graduate by recruiters and satisfied to recruit goal-oriented graduates. According to Black (2010), in the article published showed that in a year there are number of graduates come out from the universities but they are not getting the correct employability due to lack of skills and special focus is on problem-solving skills. According to the facts presented by Harris (2019), university administrative jobs are required to be updated with the technology as they work in different job roles as adding student data to the system, update the webpage and use PowerPoint presentation to prepare lecture slides for lecturers.

Attitude competency requirement of fresh graduates and employability

In view of Bimrose (2009), it emphasizes that posing positive attitudes of fresh graduate are highly considering in Business and customer awareness areas by the recruiters. According to the Carr (2017), most companies are not happy about the attitudes of the fresh graduates when reflect on attitude to work, lack of resilience, lack of self-management, and lack of cultural management the same articles further confirms that CBI and Pearson published a report starting recruiters afraid of fulfilling their job requirements due to aforesaid attitude factors possessed by fresh graduates. Further, the employers have the perception of fresh graduates are not competent or not professional, lack of self-confidence, lack of initiatives and lack of self-driven if fresh graduate not practiced and possessed proper attitudes (Revesz, 2013). According to ISOS and Westat (2010), discussion forum has conducted to find the impact of attitudes such as self-motivation, self-discipline, commitment, and dedication in a fresh graduate to get a job. Further, Wimalasiri (2015), has identified that majority of the companies ponder following attitudes of fresh graduate when they recruit a person for a suitable position; Positive attitude,

motivation, self-awareness, initiatives, stress tolerance, reliability, loyalty, flexibility, adaptability, self-management, professionalism, work ethics, and positive self-esteem. As reported by Grabowska (2012), flexibility is the most desired feature in the labour market as many employers seek the employees who can adjust to the changing situations, ready to accept new tasks, and availability whenever required to perform the job.

Further, the flexibility of a graduates would affect on entering to job market or not and even decided the long stay in the job market. According to the findings of Martin et al.'s (2012) there are three adaptability factors that should be possess by a teacher when making adjustments to the, feelings, behaviour and thoughts in incidents of when a teacher tasked to deliver the lectures in unfamiliar subject areas; 1) lecturer needs to find link between known areas and the new subject area which is called the cognitive adaptability, 2) seek the support from a person who is familiar in new subject areas which is known as behavioural adaptability and 3) find the solution during the time provided to get start teaching in the new subject area which calls emotional adaptability. According to Rosati (2017), self-motivated teachers always have smiling face, cheerful, and pleasant no matter what they actually feeling or going through and this self-motivation comes with the attitude and the behaviour of the teacher which seeks by the recruiters. The stress tolerance has been identified as main factors when selecting an employee as this will causes in reducing the teaching quality, dissatisfaction of students, less performance of the teachers and impact on the overall performance of the university (Tahir, 2011).

Personal traits competency requirement of fresh graduate and employability

According to research conducted by Sackett and Walmsley (2014), they have

identified that there are two main factors which considered by employer as conscientiousness (highly impact on the job performance) agreeableness and emotional stability of fresh graduate in recruitment. Employee skills alone will not build a great employee but the way the employee behave in different situations highlights the personality of fresh graduate and when seek an employment it is highly considered by recruiters to test whether fresh graduates possess personality traits such as professionalism, high energy, confidence, intellectual curiosity and self-monitoring (Empextrack, 2013). Alluding to the finding of Paljug (2018), shows that companies assess the fresh graduates based on their dependability, communication, and flexibility with the personality traits such as multitasker, strategies, decider, cautious person, independent thinker, team player and fit to the culture. According to Furnham, Mansi and Tan (2017), in higher education sector a lecturer should possess personality traits such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and openness. Foregoing findings show that it is necessary for fresh graduate to possess personality traits in find employment in higher education sector.

According to Gourneau (2005), there is an impact of lecturer on making positive difference in student's life and has identified the attitudes that a lecturer should possess as genuine caring and kindness, willingness to share responsibility, sincere sensitivity to the student' diversity, motivating students with learning experiences, show enthusiasm for simulating the creativity of student. The factors presented in the open forum published under "University administrators – 'lovely and well-meaning' but still below stairs", Burnett (2017) has expressed the idea of being self- confidence in the university administration as not only having a degree

qualification to secure the position in the university administration team it is required an employee to possess self-confidence which helps to defend the position.

In education sector academic leaders should possess the self-awareness when dealing with people and situations and according to Gunsalus (2019), self-awareness would help leaders/ managers to understand own methods, moods, opinions and capabilities that can be useful in reacting to stable situations and facing challenges. According to the facts published by Special Education Degree (2013), enthusiasm allows a teacher to bring the difficult subjects to more simple, understanding and interesting manner which is making the complex subject matter to simple and make the students inspired to complete the programme easily. Aforementioned findings confirm the reason that recruiter seeks enthusiasm from the fresh graduates in recruitment process. Further refer to the research findings of Xiao and Wilkins (2015), showed that committed lecturers would put a lot effort to deliver the curriculum effective manner and delivery is high in quality which students prefer getting the service of committed lecturers.

METHODOLOGY

The study has been designed with the epistemological standpoint of positivism and with a deductive approach. The research main aim was "to find the expected employability skills of fresh graduates and employment opportunities exist from the managers' perspective of non-state degree awarding institutions". It was accompanied by the quantitative research methods. The primary research conducted to identify the sub factors that further emphasize knowledge (Commercial Knowledge, English Proficiency, Subject Knowledge, Practical Knowledge), skills (Communication

Skills, Teamwork, Problem-Solving, IT Skills), attitude (Flexibility, Adaptability, Self-Motivation, Stress Tolerance) and personal traits (Confidence, Self-Awareness, Enthusiasm, Commitment) competencies of fresh graduates which effects on finding proper job opportunities. The aforesaid employability skills further categorized and tested through descriptive statistical analysis in this research.

The study was conducted using managers from selected non-state degree awarding institutions in Colombo district. Selected sample included 51 experienced managerial level staff (individuals). The sample selection was made, rely upon the convenience sampling method from 60 populations throughout 51 non-state degree awarding institutions in Colombo district. The sample selected covers the non-state institutions that currently offer their own degree programmes which are recognized by the University Grant Commission of Sri Lanka and private institutions which are located in Colombo District and offering degrees in affiliation with the foreign universities. Data has been collected through a structured questionnaire and the questionnaire distributed among the respondents via google survey.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data was collected once in the study and quantitative data analysis conducted based on descriptive statistical analysis (frequency analysis) using SPSS 6.0. The analysis results generated based on the perspective of the managers by considering their expectations of fresh graduates, on knowledge, skills, attitude, and personal traits when making the recruitment decision.

The analysis results of the commercial knowledge related question showed that most of the managers agreed (49%) that

fresh graduates should possess commercial knowledge and it depicted the respondent's choices respectively 17.6 % and 27.5 % for strongly agree and neutral. According to the research findings of Zuzel (2010), which conducted based on Scottish bio medical graduates and their employers it shows that 57.1% of employers agreed that they consider the commercial knowledge in recruitment. Further, Fonseka et. al (2015), the research conducted covering five industries in Sri Lanka qualitative analysis emphasis that graduate required to possess the knowledge of business. Based on the findings of different perspectives and this research findings from managers perspectives proves that fresh graduates should possess the commercial knowledge.

According to the results received for subject knowledge based question, the analysis illustrated the most responses are for agree (60.8 %) answer where respondents further preferred selecting the strongly agree response where 3.9% has selected the neutral answer. According to Chandrakumar (2014), it showed that subject knowledge is required in graduate employability as correlation depicted high significance. The data was collected from graduate's perspective who graduated between 2008 to 2013 in above mentioned research. Further, Kumara et. al (2017), has shown in their research conducted focusing management students, averagely 30% of management graduates accepted that it is required to have a degree for employability. The graduates and managers perspectives comparison prove that managers have high expectation on commercial knowledge of fresh graduate than fresh graduates think.

Practical knowledge-based question analysis expressed that 47.1 % of respondents have selected agreed response with 3.9 % and 45.1% have selected correspondingly neutral strongly agree answers. Survey analysis of Kumara et. al

(2017), shows that averagely 38% of management graduates have accepted that it is required for graduate to have work experience to find a proper job opportunity. However, these research findings also prove that the requirement of practical knowledge of fresh graduate in recruitment from managers' perspective comparatively high than fresh graduates' perspective. As per the results generated through statistical analysis for English proficiency-based question, most respondents selected agreed (62.7 %) answer which other respondents have selected neutral (5.9%) and strongly agree (27.5 %) answers. Overall respondents' answers for the English proficiency question showed between neutral and strongly agree where less respondents have selected answers strongly disagree and disagree. The research findings of Kumara at. el (2017), proved that 35% management graduate has confirmed that English proficiency is required in employment. According to the management graduate's perception, it emphasized the requirement of English proficiency in job recruitment which is comparatively low when consider the managers' perspective of this research.

Descriptive analysis for communication question, showed that most of the respondents picked agree (52.9%) answer and rest of the responds opted picking strongly agree (37.3 %) and neutral (3.9%) responses. According to the research conducted by Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), it showed that only university lecturers have identified that fresh graduates should possess communication skills to gain job opportunity which findings indicated high significance. The findings of Fonseka at. el (2015), showed that the employer checks verbal and written communication of fresh graduates through their qualitative research findings. Above mentioned research findings prove that managers have high expectation on fresh graduate's communication skills.

Analysis of team working based question illustrated that many respondents have selected agree (52.9 %) answer where balanced respondents have chosen strongly agree (37.3 %) and neutral (5.9%) answers. The findings of Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), evident that male and female graduates, employers, lecturers have accepted that graduates should possess team working to obtain an employment as per the analysis results depicted high significance towards employability. The qualitative research findings of Fonseka at. el (2015), proved that to achieve the orgnisational goals the employees must have team working skills and will consider in recruiting graduates. When refer to the Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), finding it proved the requirement of team working through three different perspectives including recruiters and the qualitative research findings further confirms the need of team working skills. The perspective of non-state institutional managers of this research also evident that recruiters highly seek team working skills from fresh graduates.

The problem-solving related question analysis displayed that many respondents have selected agreed answer (58.8%) which other respondents opted picking neutral (5.9 %) and strongly agree (31.4 %) answers. According to the research conducted by Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), based on male and female graduates, employers, lecturers the statistical findings showed high significance which graduates has identified problem solving skills will improve the employability opportunities of fresh graduate. According to Fonseka at. el (2015), the qualitative analysis results showed that five orgnisations selected in the research the employers have significant consideration on graduate's problem-solving skills. As to these findings, it depicted that problem-solving skills will be checked from fresh

graduates in recruitment through different perspectives. The same fact proved in this research which the analysis done through managers perspective and confirmed the need of possessing problem solving skills by fresh graduates in recruitment.

According to the further analysis conducted for IT skills-based question, most respondents selected strongly agreed (52.9%) answer and rest of the respondents have selected Strongly agree (23.6%) and neutral (5.9 %) answers. However, as to Kumara et al (2017), averagely 15% management graduates accepted that the requirement of computer literacy in employment. But it is a very low consideration. However, compared to Kumara et al (2017) findings, this research finding show that the managers perspective is higher, and they expect more IT competency from fresh graduates than the level of IT skills that graduate considers should be possessed.

Analysis results of the self-motivated question showed that majority of the respondents selected agree (68.6%) with balanced respondents' choice distribution between neutral (3.9%) and strongly agree (25.5%). The qualitative research findings of Fonseka et al (2015), showed that employer always check the commerce and management graduates to possess work with motivation. This research focused on all the fresh graduates and it proved the importance of graduates' self-motivation on employment through managers' perspective.

The adaptability-based question analysis pointed that 58.8 % of respondents have selected agree and other respondents have selected answers as strongly agree (35.3.5%) and Neutral (3.9 %). The qualitative study conducted by Wimalasiri (2015) on employer perspective from different industries of FMCG, Telecommunication, media, finance, and accounting on recruiting commerce stream graduates have proved that adaptability under attitude

competency has high concern in recruitment. According to these different perspectives it proved the requirement of fresh graduates possessing adaptability is essential regardless to the area of employment from managers perspective.

The mean value of stress tolerance-based question showed that 45.1% respondents selected agree and rest of the respondent answers distributed between neutral (9.8 %) and strongly agree (43.1 %). According to the research conducted by Thahir (2011) in Pakistan, the graduates specially recruiting for the teaching is required to possess stress tolerance and this proved with the analysis results received as high significance. Though this is from a different country and only considered in recruiting teachers, it is compatible with the managers' view. In general, when they make decisions to recruit a fresh graduate, the stress tolerance competency will be considered.

As per the analysis details of flexibility related question, the majority of the responses towards agree (52.9%) answer and others have selected strongly agree (41.2%) and neutral (5.9%) answers. The qualitative study conducted by Wimalasiri (2015) has proven that flexibility has highly concern by the employers. Generally, when recruiting fresh graduates, the managers seek the flexibility of them.

Taking into the account of confidence level question analysis, it emphasized that higher number of respondents have selected the agree answer (49%) and rest of the respondent answers distribution occurred between strongly agree (39.2%) and neutral (7.8%) responses. The study conducted by Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), showed that high significance towards the employability of graduate's confident from the data collected through graduates, employers, and lecturers. The analysis conducted by Wickramasinghe and Perera (2010), based on three perspectives and proves the need of fresh

graduate's confidence level in recruitment where this research findings also proves the need of confidence level of fresh graduates through managers perspective.

The self-awareness question analysis illustrated many respondents have selected agree (68.6 %) answer where other respondents opted selecting strongly agree (25.5 %) and neutral (2%) answers. According to Kumara et al. (2017), it shows averagely 09% management graduates accepted the requirement of self-awareness in employment of the graduate. Kumara et al. (2017), research was conducted from the viewpoints of graduates and identified that there is a very less requirement of self-awareness to be possessed by graduate in recruitment where this research was conducted through the perspective of managers and findings proved that there is a high concern on self-awareness of fresh graduates. Thus, this further confirms that graduate's point of view of possessing self-awareness is less, but manager or recruiters have high expectation on the same competency of fresh graduate.

The analysis of enthusiasm related question revealed that considerable number of respondents have selected agree (49 %) answer and rest of the respondents have selected neutral (7.8 %) and strongly agree (39.2 %) answers. The research findings of Gourneau (2005) show the importance of having enthusiasm to perform the job role related to teaching and this proves that the recruiters consider the enthusiasm of graduates in recruitment. Though this research was conducted in different country and only considered the requirement of enthusiasm of teachers, the findings are compatible with the current study which also identified that enthusiasm is as a requirement of fresh graduate in recruitment.

Final analysis conducted for commitment depicted most respondents selected agree (58.8 %) answer and other

respondents have chosen strongly agree (33.3 %) and neutral (5.9%) answers. The research findings of Fonseka et al. (2015), showed that employers consider the ability of graduates to use their own initiatives to work and committed to the job role provided. The managers' perspective is similar to it and they also think that the fresh graduates should have job commitment to get a suitable job.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings lead to draw the attention of employability skills of fresh graduates which underpins to improve and find recruitment opportunities in non-state degree awarding institutions in Colombo district. The research findings proved the need of four employability skills of fresh graduates as Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, and personal traits which managers consider in recruitment.

The study findings confirmed that managers have higher expectations for knowledge-based employability skills of fresh graduates than perspectives of fresh graduates. The findings reinforced that considering knowledge as alone not sufficient which fresh graduates need to be further understood knowledge sub factors. The fresh graduate can be improved knowledge through; 1) commercial knowledge and practical knowledge- take part of voluntary support which will help fresh graduate to understand and improve commercial knowledge (Graduateadvantage, 2020), 2) Subject Knowledge- Participate in internal or external training programmes (Mills, 2013), and 3) English proficiency- immerse oneself in English news and converse in English (Milne, 2019).

This study findings emphasized the importance that fresh graduates should possess the skills and managers expectations are higher than perspective of fresh graduate. Engrossed the skills competency requirement of fresh graduate

to enter to higher education sector job market further reviewed based on the subcategories identified in the study. Fresh graduates can focus on 1) communication-reading articles, books, magazines or seek the support of a mentor or coacher to learn to make effective communication (Garfinkle,2020), 2) team working-involve in group project and join with local groups (Empxtrack, 2020), 3) problem solving- application of five problem solving process (Doyle, 2020), and 4) IT skills- follow IT course or programmes (Escobar, 2015), to improve the skills competency.

This research proved that managers have high expectation on fresh graduates' attitude and seek through job interview. It is visible that attitude competency should be followed through different categories without focusing attitude as a single factor which fresh graduates can get more opportunities in the higher education job market. Improving attitude oneself can be done through 1)self-motivation- attend to short courses, seminars and workshops to get an understanding about the job position and create interest to generate self-motivation (ABELLO, 2020), 2) adaptability-Stretch the comfort zone and accept new challenges (Trainingzone,2019), 3) stress tolerance-organise oneself and set clear goals(Carr, 2020), and 4)flexibility-time management and improve emotional intelligence (Targetjobs, 2019) .

Based on the research findings it proved that fresh graduates must possess personal traits to get a job according to managers perspective which managers proved to have high expectation on this competency. A fresh graduate who seeks the employment opportunities in the higher education sector must possess the personal traits employability skills by focusing to improve the competency through improvement of the sub factors; 1) confident- practising what you learnt in real scenarios that would lead to make the

fresh graduate a perfect fit which builds the confidence of holding new job roles or activities(Maclang, 2015), 2) self-awareness-invest in correct education and do the job which fit to graduate(Hughes, 2017), 3) enthusiasm-make reliable goals that can be achievable (Wood, 2012) , and 4) commitment- set goals with proper breaks in life (Rayan, 2020).

The commitment of the employee leads to effectiveness of the service delivery and ultimately effects on the service quality. Non-state degree awarding institutions now focus more on all the factors mentioned above as their purpose is to deliver a quality service which will improve their standard and therefore when they recruit, they highly assist the employability skills of fresh graduates. The fresh graduates' perspectives oneself employability skills must be identified and improved by paying attention to all the possible employability skills including the subcategories. This would help to reduce the stress, dissatisfaction, and depression of fresh graduates for unemployment or underemployment but focus on improving the employability skills.

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