

*Original Paper*

The Importance of Developing Soft Skill Sets for the  
Employability of Business Graduates in Vietnam: A Field Study  
on Selected Business Employers

Thi Thu Hang Truong<sup>1\*</sup>, Ronald S. Laura<sup>1</sup> & Kylie Shaw<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of Education, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia

\* Thi Thu Hang Truong, School of Education, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia

Received: December 20, 2017      Accepted: January 1, 2018      Online Published: January 17, 2018

doi:10.22158/jecs.v2n1p32      URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jecs.v2n1p32>

**Abstract**

*Vietnam has been one of the best performing economies in the world over the last decade (Nguyen et al., 2008; The World Bank, 2016). The process of Vietnam's integration into the world economic market, along with the country's advancements in industrialization and modernization, have increased demands to improve and augment the productivity of the work force. This being so, Vietnam is now at a crucial stage of its expansionary economic development, assimilating some 425,000 tertiary graduates into its workforce during the 2014-2015 academic year (TalkVietnam, 2015). The country is also faced with a momentous challenge to provide highly qualified personnel for the emerging modern sectors of the economy. A particularly serious problem is how the country's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will equip graduates with the appropriate skills and knowledge needed to meet the demands of rapidly increasing economic development. Our central objective in this paper is twofold: firstly, to critically examine and assess the scholarly literature on the technological importance of soft skills in the business arena. Second to conduct a field study on the perspectives held by employers on the specific character of variant combinatory sets of key soft skills best suited for maximising commercial outcomes for employers and the companies they serve in economically vibrant business regions worldwide. The concluding section of the paper will be concerned to determine the extent to which the various skill set combinations can be sufficiently pedagogically developed so they become embedded as foundational in the creation of an international business school curriculum.*

**Keywords**

*soft skills, higher education, business education, workplace skills*

## 1. Introduction

There is a widening gap between the types of skills and level of expertise required by the business sector on the one hand, and the absence of those same skills and general low aptitude of business school graduates. This disparity has exacerbated the current and acute dissatisfaction felt by employers when trying to recruit appropriately trained graduates, even though the number of tertiary graduates has increased rapidly over recent years. This has meant jobs remain unfilled and in parallel to this, there is a tide of rising unemployment (Tran, 2006; Tran, 2013). As a result, the number of university graduates unable to find a job has been increasing exponentially in Vietnam and now accounts for one fifth of the country's unemployment (General Statistics Office, 2014). Pham (2013) found that two thirds of potential Vietnamese employees lack work-ready competencies, and the level of the work readiness of the remaining one third is of concern. A limitation in skills is considered to be one of the biggest barriers preventing Vietnamese graduates smoothly transitioning from university to the workplace (Tran, 2006; Tran & Swierczek, 2009). Interestingly, the skills gap is not so much a deficiency in the technical or "hard skills". Rather, it is claimed that one of the main reasons for the ill-prepared university graduates is that their "soft skills", or what might be called "people skills", are weak or totally absent (Pham, 2008; Tran & Swierczek, 2009). Many new Economics and Business graduates cannot take up their positions after their recruitment because their soft skills competency is far below what business employers expect. It is "soft skill incompetence", not "hard skills inadequacy" that paradoxically jeopardizes business growth and has created such a significant challenge for business development.

The cause of the problem is that the development of the soft skills curriculum in Vietnamese Business Higher Education Institutions (BHEIs) in Vietnam has not kept pace with the changing needs of the economy (Dennis & Phan, 2005). BHEIs have failed to pay sufficient attention to equipping their students with the requisite level of soft skill competency. Given the growing awareness of employers regarding the quintessential role played by soft skills in business success and in economic development, the government of Vietnam has decided to initiate and implement one of three "breakthrough areas" in the Socio-Economic Development Strategies 2011-2020 by redirecting human resources towards the development of new working skills, particularly, the 'soft skills' necessary to facilitate the rapid growth of modern industry and business innovation (The World Bank, 2011; British Council, 2012). Curriculum development in the business school sector is now acknowledged by the government as a vital ingredient for improving the overall quality of higher education. Cognisant of the increasing importance of curriculum development, the government of Vietnam issued a document in 2004 (No.1269/CP-KG), which assigned to leading HEIs the task of designing advanced curricular innovations. The concept of "advanced curricular innovations" refers to the development of new curriculum directions which are properly designed to reflect the curriculum reforms currently in place at the most prestigious universities in the world. The new models of Vietnamese curriculum development are meant to include important aspects of the subject content, teaching methods, and

organisational training and management processes of the world's leading universities (Vietnamese Minister of Education and Training, 2008, p. 3).

As the higher education system in Vietnam continues to grow steadily, there has emerged a variety of more modern institutions equipped with the newest technology and strategies for hard skills training. Nonetheless, the biggest weakness is the system's failure to create human resource capacities in soft skills development to meet the demands required to realize industrialization and modernization, while also satisfying the requirements for international integration (Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, 2005b). When all is said, any progress on the updating of soft skill subjects in the curriculum of tertiary business institutions has not been on par with the more sophisticated needs of Vietnam's economy (Tran, 2010; Tran & Swierczek, 2009; Nguyen, 2009; Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, 2008a; Le & Truong, 2005). The current curriculum framework, according to Tran and Swierczek (2009), is too theory-oriented, and according to Stephen et al. (2006) and Vu (2008) it is too heavily laden with subjects which students are required to take, primarily to accumulate the compulsory credit points they need in order to graduate (Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, 2010). Vu (2008) compares the curriculum framework of North-Western University, USA with the mandatory curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) for every public university in Vietnam and concludes that the curriculum design of the Vietnamese university contains twice the content of the American one. Vietnamese higher education institutions, however, have not given sufficient attention to incorporating essential business skills and other employer needs into their curriculum objectives (Tran & Swierczek, 2009). This problem exists partly because of the lack of collaboration between educational institutions, on the one hand, and the ideological and bureaucratic state centric governance system underpinning business and industry goals in education on the other (Vietnam Competiveness Report, 2010).

## **2. Literature Review**

Soft skills are often considered in the global literature as playing an integral role in business success (Lisbon Council, 2007; Prinianaki, 2004) although soft skills education remains neglected in the curriculum objectives of Vietnamese business schools. Lamentably, the design of the Vietnamese business curriculum remains deprived of the market-orientation required to be truly competitive. The Vietnamese educational system predominantly focuses on the burden of inculcating the technical skills required for an industrial society (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007) while the academic orientation of soft skills development remains an obscure disciplinary area in Vietnamese universities (Tran & Swierczek, 2009). A few business programs cover soft skills as a general subject, but this represents only a minuscule three credits in the syllabus. In some educational institutions, soft skills are integrated into the curriculum as optional credits (Vietnamnet, 2012). Although all educational institutions are under MOET's management of specific curriculum content, schools of Business are allowed to teach their own version of soft skills which are resourced by an

individual or group of individuals in each school and are then approved by MOET. There are a few popular programs relating to “soft skills” currently taught in these schools. These subjects include: Philosophy, Management Psychology, Leadership Arts, Communication Arts, Negotiation Arts, Business Administration, Human Resources Administration, Selling Administration, and Marketing. These skills are regarded by these institutions as necessary for their own students. Furthermore, professional soft skills are sometimes taught in certain business training centers as short-term courses but these are costly. It has also been reported that training for soft skills has become popular in the form of extra-curricular activities and seminars in some Vietnamese universities (ELearning, 2017).

There are different modalities of soft skills training, however, there is still no comprehensive program format that makes it possible to ensure graduates systematically develop soft skills effectively during their degree. While it has been claimed that methods of soft skills instruction have recently been improved by introducing classroom technologies, such as the internet and projectors designed to increase teacher-student interaction, these methods have not shown themselves to improve the development of student creativity, intellectual imagination and initiative. Even within these contexts, the traditional teaching methods of lecturing to pass on knowledge from the lecturers to students still dominate. Within this approach, there is very little chance for students to engage in soft skills practice. Thus, after leaving the class, many students forget the material they had just been taught (Tran, 2013). Such methods even adversely affect the teachers themselves, as their highly regimented informational approach minimizes their own capacity for creativity and interesting forms of interactional instruction with their students.

Sourcing soft skills lecturers is also a major problem within Vietnam’s higher education business institutions. There is a lack of specialist lecturers with expertise in the field of soft skills. Those who are teaching soft skills in HEIs are lecturers in relevant disciplines, staff whose work relates to students and union members. Most teachers of soft skills have little, if any, experience in the workplace and they have had few opportunities to pragmatically develop soft skills scenarios. They normally secure a teaching job in the university straight after graduation, having been trained in another discipline. Lamentably, they are nevertheless put in charge of teaching soft skills. This being so, it suggests that both the level of their soft skills expertise and their capacity to effectively teach soft skill competencies to students which are aligned with current business practice are manifestly deficient.

The cultural conservatism of Confucian heritage shapes students’ learning style in Vietnam (Tran, 2013). This learning style is claimed to be passive and is no longer appropriate, particularly as university students increasingly need to develop soft skills for the workplace. Within their culture, Vietnamese people are often very “closed” in regards to their interactions with each other. They are self-consciousness and worry about what others think which often makes them reluctant to engage in the kind of conversational exchanges that characterize soft skill development among students. Most of Vietnamese students are very sensitive to peer group perceptions of them, and their capacity for openness is largely controlled by what they think others will say about them. Worried about the

observations and comments of others, they are reluctant to show their soft skill capacities, especially in the contexts of team-work and communication.

A considerable scholarly literature has accumulated establishing that soft skills play an integral role in achieving the goals of business (Half, 2016; Laud & Johnson, 2012; Vu et al., 2011; Fotopoulos & Psomas, 2008; Spencer, R. & Spencer, A., 2003; Ganzel, 2001). It is clear that enough evidence-based research exists to show that to compete effectively within the global economic market, the efficacy of “hard skills” mediation and deployment requires that the people who make use of them must also possess a high level of competency in “soft skills”. The investigation conducted by the Institution for Education Research in Ho Chi Minh University of Pedagogy, indicated that 72% of higher degree students in Vietnam remain deficient in soft skill competencies, which in turn, led to an increased number of graduates missing out on jobs (50% in 2008 and 64% in 2011). Statistics drawn from this study also revealed that 50% of higher education graduates had to be retrained at work because they relied solely upon their technical skills and failed to maximize their overall performance due to their deficiency in soft skills (Giao Duc Vietnam, 2012; Tran, 2010; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008). Clearly, the shortage of skilled workers, coupled with the lack of work-related competencies in graduates and the high level of unemployment among graduates, signifies the mismatch between employer needs and university responsiveness (Oliver, 2002).

The Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training has produced a key report on Vietnamese higher education, focused on a ten-year reform of the education and training system from 1986-1996 (Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, 1997). The Report confirmed that there is a weak relationship between universities and the business sector, indicating that a long-standing “communication hiatus” between educational providers and the business recipients they service, has yet to be bridged. One consequence of this deficiency is the poor performance of tertiary students in general and business tertiary students in particular, once they get employed, in as much as they are not adequately equipped with the pertinent array of soft skills demanded in current business environments. This paper addresses this gap in the literature, investigating what soft skills major employers in Vietnam identify as being the most important in the business workplace environment. This study will inform the current focus on development of soft skills for Vietnamese business educators.

### **3. Methodological Approach**

A qualitative approach was utilized to explore the employer perceptions of the main soft skills needed by business graduates in Vietnam. Interviews were held to explore the employers’ perceptions of recent business graduates’ soft skills, drawing on their experiences of interviewing recent graduates for jobs in their organisations and what skills were required to achieve maximal efficacy in the business workplace.

The researcher was concerned to deploy a purposeful and well-considered sampling strategy in selecting the participants for the study. In order to maximise the reliability of findings, the researcher

selected 15 representative business organisations from a list of the top 500 business organisations throughout Vietnam in 2011 (Vietnamnet, 2011). The businesses were selected in terms of income, property, annual growth, volume of business, capital, strength of manpower and speed of development. The respondents were selected from various types of business and industries, ranging from the automobile industry, real estate, mining and geology, textiles, power generation, electronics, food and beverages, agriculture, tourism, and financial consultancy.

With the onset of economic liberalisation and privatisation in Vietnam, there has been a tendency in opening up of more private companies recently (Baomoi, 2014). The researcher selected eight non-government-owned enterprises, four government-owned enterprises, and three Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which were representative of the sample. The researcher ensured that there was a spread of organisations across regions, thereby incorporating, the north, south and central regions of the country into the representative sample. Six business organizations were located in Ha Noi Capital and Ho Chi Minh City, which are the main economic centres of Vietnam, another nine organizations were located in the other small, medium and big cities. The sample was selected from a broad spectrum of companies, ranging from small business with around 100 employees (13%) to medium sized business with around 200-600 employees (33%) and large businesses, employing 2000 to 16,000 employees (53%). Of particular interest in this study, these business organisations conducted annual recruitment, indicating that they would have an interest in and some understanding of the soft skills of new graduates.

The aim of the interviews was to uncover the employers' perception in terms of the skill demands for graduates in the contemporary workplace. All respondents representing the selected organisations were in managerial positions, of which 11 were in upper management and another four were in middle management. The breadth of managerial experience ranged from 2 years to 27 years. With respect to the level of their academic qualifications, 14 respondents held a Bachelor degree, and one had a Master degree qualification. The majority of participants held degrees in Business, all of whom felt their degrees assisted them in providing valid perceptions of soft skills development in those businesses representing their area of expertise. The remaining four had degrees from various disciplines encompassing Civil Engineering, Labour Management, Accountancy, and Electrical Engineering.

For exploration of the central phenomenon of soft skills education, a new field of study in the country, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was deemed to be the most appropriate to elicit a range of perspectives about the subject area (Davies, 2007, p. 29). A semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to give respondents a copy of the general questions in advance and to have a set of prompt questions to guide the discussion. Moreover, the interview process was flexible enough to allow interviewees to express their thoughts and ideas, and thus build upon and explore the participants' responses to the prompt questions, or "drill down" into issues raised during the conversation (Sandra & Jemina, 2013). All interviews were undertaken in Vietnamese and then recoded, transcribed and then translated into English. The results were presented in descriptive and

narrative form as addressed by Creswell (2014) the importance of creating thick description as the vehicle for communicating a holistic picture of the experience and perspectives of business employers.

### 3.1 Findings

The section reports on the three themes that emerged from the interview data: the respondents' understanding of the concept of soft skills; their perceptions of the importance of soft skills in the business workplace; and their suggestions for specific essential soft skills necessary for business success.

### 3.2 Importance of Specific Soft Skills in Business Workplace

When considering the increasing importance of soft skills compared to hard skills in relation to employment success, the respondents presented some differing views. Around a quarter of respondents argued that there is an equal contribution of soft and hard skills, outlining that both soft and hard skills have their particular strengths. For example, hard skills contributed to the growth of an individual, but soft skills contribute to the success of an individual in terms of getting a job and career advancement. Over half of respondents argued that soft skills played a more central role than hard skills, particularly in the business fields. As indicated by one respondent:

*“In many business situations, a person owning good soft skills can change a problem into an opportunity and deal with the adversaries in a better and more constructive manner”*  
(Interview 8).

In particular, the respondents highlighted the increasingly important role of soft skills in the present context of the integration of the Vietnamese economy into the global business world. Two respondents from Foreign Direct Investment enterprises (FDI enterprise) with a long history of multi-national business, emphasised this point with the following comments:

*“... soft skills play an integral role in business transactions with other countries ...”*  
(Interview 15)

*“... the global business environment requires very high competitiveness so that the labour force involved with this must possess a clever head with excellent interpersonal skills ...”*  
(Interview 14)

Notably, respondents thought that soft skills have become extremely important in the sales field because they facilitate marketing of a product that is a key factor for successful sales:

*“... for an example, some years ago, the price and quality were perceived to be the most important factors to sell a product. Today, however, soft skills appear to be an important element to decide if a product can be sold ...”* (Interview 9)

*“Buying and selling products effectively depends on how good our soft skills are”* (Interview 10)

The importance of soft skills was emphasised by one respondent, working in an FID enterprise. For this respondent's organisation, one of the compulsory recruiting criteria was that a prospective employee must possess soft skills in areas such as Communication, Group-work, Customer Service,

Responsibility, Flexibility and other personal qualities that were potentially beneficial for a specific job. Soft skills competency was promoted as one of the top priorities for applicants seeking a job with their company:

*“Individuals gifted with soft skills would be more successful at work and would be an asset in enhancing the business of the company”* (Interview 13)

Moreover, there was a more general view about the relevance of soft skills in schooling and daily life.

*“At school, soft skills help students to perform their study well by the skills of self-management, self-study, and problem-solving. They also facilitate to maintain a happy life”* (Interview 15)

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, a small group of respondents from the manufacturing and processing sector considered soft skills to be less important than hard skills. This group remained convinced that, at least for specific tradespeople such as mechanics and technicians, the tasks they were required to undertake could be done efficiently without having to acquire soft skills. The major reason for this was their belief that interaction with and dependence upon other colleagues in such trades would be minimal, therefore would not require the inter-personal skills characteristic of soft skills.

Nevertheless, by and large, employers preferred those applicants who possessed a range of soft skills. Most respondents held the view that soft skills contributed substantially to business success and were important irrespective of occupation.

### *3.3 Identification of Essential Soft Skills in Business Workplace*

The identification of soft skills necessary in the business workplace depended on each respondent's situation given they came from different regions, types of organisations and levels of management. It therefore stands to reason that they gave divergent perspectives about which soft skills were needed. The most important specific soft skills were therefore identified based on two factors:

- (1) the employers' feedback on the specific soft skills they believed recent graduates were deficient in, and
- (2) their expertise in knowing which soft skills were currently needed most in the Vietnamese business workplace.

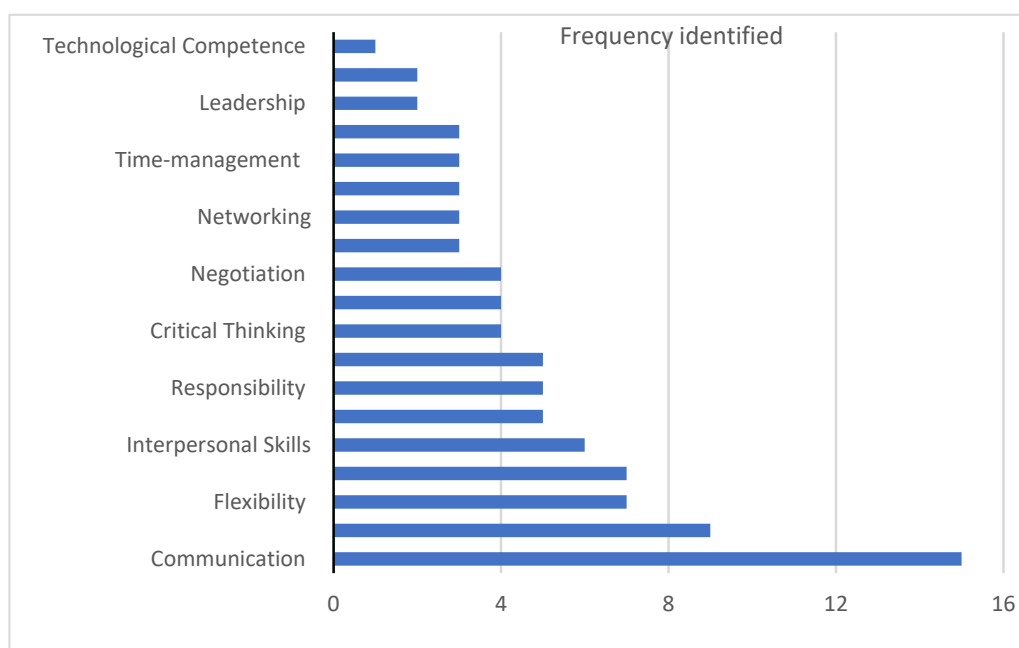
There were a range of views about the essential soft skills needed, which varied according to the speciality and expertise of the respondent. Employers with more expertise were seeking graduates with a wider range of soft skills. One respondent, who had 27 years of experience as a business manager, indicated that to be successful at work in any kind of business or industry, employees should possess as many soft skills as possible and supplement them with hard skills to perform effortlessly and efficiently. Another respondent, who held a Master in Business Management, also subscribed to the view that the more soft skills you have, the more successful you are.

Other less experienced respondents presented the view that since business involves different sectors, each business area requires different soft skills. Some soft skills may be advantageous to one field of business but may not have much relevance for the other. For example, sales staff need to be equipped



with well-developed verbal and written communication skills, whereas marketing staff should also have these communication skills in addition to market research and critical thinking skills. In accounting and finance, business ethics and responsibility were reported as the crucial skills. One person may excel in some soft skills, another will excel in other soft skills, therefore the employer has to recognise the potential of each prospective employee and allocate them to the work portfolio that matches their specific strengths to extract their best performance.

In the interviews, respondents were asked to identify the most important soft skills business graduates needed when they started work in their organisation. These soft skills were ranked in descending order based on the frequency with which respondents identified them. The results are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The Most Important Soft Skills Identified by Employers**

#### **4. Discussion: The Status of Business Graduates' Employment**

The impact of soft skills was acknowledged as significant in the business workplace by respondents. However, they also acknowledged that there were difficulties in finding graduates with the required soft skills. One respondent reported:

*“There exist many vacancies in our company because we cannot find enough employees who can meet the requirements”* (Interview 11)

Thirteen of the fifteen employers interviewed were of the opinion that the quality of graduates is very low and does not meet the needs of business and industry. There was a serious mismatch between what graduates had learnt and what prospective employers wanted them to know. According to one respondent, although recent graduates were hard-working and some of them were eager to acquire

knowledge, they did not understand fully what they had studied or what skills or knowledge were needed to apply for employment once they graduated. Another respondent presented his view that only 30% of graduates met the requirements of the job, as they lacked work-orientation and could not effectively put their university acquired skills and knowledge into practice. It was perceived that a growing number of university graduates could not find jobs matching their academic qualifications and skills, and some had to accept manual work. Additionally, an increasing number of graduates were turning to part-time jobs or finding themselves trapped in temporary employment. Most need to be retrained on the job, even for simple skills.

Companies on the whole often found it hard to recruit the candidates with the skills required for the job. It was thought some graduates, who were recruited due to pressures of man-power shortages, after a time, disappointed employers as they lacked proficiency and were unable to respond to real-world situations. As shared by one respondent:

*“Even graduates with good academic records cannot perform well when selected for employment as they don’t possess adequate or appropriate soft skills”* (Interview 10)

When asked about the typical problems encountered by new graduates employed by their organisation, the respondents complained about the inefficient quality of recent graduates’ working skills. Graduates “lack a number of necessary soft skills such as communication, negotiation, problem-solving, team-work and adaptability”, a manager of a Government enterprise explained. Another commented that most graduates were weak in their level of knowledge, practical skills, methods of scientific thinking and self-directed learning skills. Only those who acquired degrees from overseas universities were thought to be equipped to work effectively. It was perceived that because of this, many Vietnamese students looked for educational opportunities outside Vietnam, especially in developed countries, to improve their competence and hence employability. The graduates of western universities were sought after by employers.

A quarter of respondents attributed the graduates’ deficit in soft skills to be a consequence of Vietnamese culture. Some thought that conservatism and selfishness led to poor team-work skills, with one respondent commenting:

*“One intelligent person can finish a task well in time, but when three intelligent people are assigned the same task together, they fail to complete it well ahead of time as expected”* (Interview 2)

Another added that the “closed” culture along with traditional styles of teacher-centred learning created passive and dependent students. As a consequence, when they left school they do not readily take up responsibility and lacked creativity at work. In turn, this limited their capability to work for professional businesses. One respondent expanded on this:

*“Vietnamese people are often shy and closed in socialising and passive in interacting with others. They don’t appreciate much on some acceptable forms of diplomacy conforming to western culture such as dancing, which has a good potential to gain business agreement...”*

*They are not often confident to raise their own ideas, but like to follow the others”* (Interview 5)

Overall, the perception of respondents towards the quality of Vietnamese business graduates was negative as they believed graduates to be deficient in many of important soft skills that enhanced performance in the business workplace. Skill mismatch was seen as a persistent and growing problem. An indication of the deficiency in soft skills was made apparent by the number of respondents who commented that they needed to re-train new employees for the soft skills required to do their job.

## **5. Conclusion**

The study indicates that there is a growing concern among employers in Vietnam that Business graduates have the necessary soft skills needed to be competitive in the workplace. Furthermore, these results indicate a deficiency in the formal business tertiary curricula that results in business graduates who cannot meet the growing demands of a changing business environment. This is particularly of concern given Vietnam is at a crucial stage of global economic integration. It is perceived that Universities have paid little attention to soft skills, or do not understand the soft skills that are required by the employers, with the consequence that many graduates do not possess adequately appropriate soft skills to perform the work required of them. On the one hand, employers struggle to recruit suitably qualified employees and are compelled to retrain them, while on the other hand, a large number of graduates are unable to find a job.

Although the term “soft skills” is relatively new in the context of Vietnamese education and business workplace, the respondents displayed a high level of awareness and comprehension regarding the concept of “soft skills” and their implications for the business workplace. This meant that their knowledge of soft skills was sufficient to provide appropriate responses to the interview questions.

Vietnamese employers perceived soft skills to be a crucial element in business success. Most respondents judged soft skills more important than hard skills in the business workplace, especially in the sales field. They emphasised the increasingly important roles of soft skills in the present context of integration of the Vietnamese economy into global business. Employers identified 19 crucial soft skills that business students needed to be successful in the business workplace.

This being so, all of the employers strongly recommended enhancement in soft skills education in which a collaboration between employers and educators was considered necessary. Conducting surveys with employers to find out which soft skills they expect business graduates to have was deemed the best way to identify which skills should be taught. Adapting the soft skills perceived as important in other countries into the Vietnamese curriculum was also suggested as way to identify the most appropriate skills.

Regarding how to deliver soft skills in the formal curriculum, integrating soft skills into the formal curriculum as a compulsory subject was preferred by employers to embedding soft skills in other subjects. As experienced by the employers, it was preferred that soft skills be learnt through practice

such as internships and placements at workplaces and work-based learning rather than relying on traditional theory based teaching methods. Employers who had considerable success in their own business careers and/or who themselves possessed strong soft skills were preferred as instructors of soft skills. Also identified as having expertise were educators with current and up-to-date work experience in industry.

Finally, the drawbacks of computechonology applications were recognised. The overuse and abuse of computechonological applications in the business workplace and at school were seen to impede soft skills development and in one reported case led to a lack of business ethics. Therefore, respondents advised that balancing non-computer-based and computer-based activities was important along with educating students and staff about the ill effects of computechonology (See Laura, 2010).

## References

- Baomoi. (2014). *Doanh nghiệp tư nhân chiếm ưu thế về số lượng* [A number of private enterprises is being dominant]. Retrieved 19 February, 2014, from <http://www.baomoi.com/doanh-nghiep-tu-nhan-chiem-uu-the-ve-so-luong/c/13123704.epi>
- British Council. (2012). *Employability skills in Southeast Asia and the needs of the new economy: The challenge of higher education*. Global Education Dialogues—The Asia Series. Ho Chi Minh City, August 9-10, 2012.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and, mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publication, Inc.
- Davies, M. B. (2007). *Doing a successful research project: Using qualitative and quantitative methods*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dennis, C. M., & Phan, T. C. (2005). Viewpoint: Pedagogical Suggestions for Teaching Business and Economics in Vietnam. *Journal of Education for Business*, 81(2), 81-84. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JOEB.81.2.81-84>
- ELearning. (2017). *Giáo dục Việt Nam thiếu kỹ năng mềm trầm trọng* [There is a deficiency of Soft Skills education in Vietnam]. Retrieved from <http://www.elearning.com.vn/giao-duc-chat-luong-n/giao-duc-viet-nam-thieu-ky-nang-mem-tram-trong-ct74>
- Fotopoulos, C., & Psomas, E. (2008). The use of quality management tools and techniques in ISO 9001:2000 certified companies: The Greek case. *International Journal of Productivity & Performance Management*, 58(6), 564-580. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17410400910977091>
- Ganzel, R. (2001). *The rise of the creative class (...and how it's transforming work, leisure, community & everyday life)*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- General Statistics Office. (2014). *Vietnam's labour market update* (Vol. 1, Quarter 1).
- Giao Duc Vietnam. (2012). *63% sinh viên thất nghiệp, chất lượng giáo dục có vấn đề* [63% of graduates are unemployed, the quality of higher education is problematic]. Retrieved from

- <http://www.giaoduc.net.vn>
- Half, R. (2016). Want to succeed in business? Get serious about developing and leveraging your soft skills. *Robert Half*. Retrieved from <https://www.roberthalf.com.au/blog/want-succeed-business-get-serious-about-developing-and-leveraging-your-soft-skills>
- Laud, R. L., & Johnson, M. (2012). The future of the MBA curriculum: Improving relevancy through evidenced based soft skills. *Academy of Educational Leadership (AEL), Allied Academies International Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, 17(1)*, 63-68.
- Laura, R. L. (2010). *The New Social Disease*. New York, N.Y., Toronto, London, University Press of America.
- Lisbon Council. (2007). *Skills for the future* (Brussels: Lisbon Council). Retrieved February 11, 2013, from <http://www.lisboncouncil.net/component/downloads/?id=214>
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Nguyen, N. A., & Nguyen, T. (2008). *Foreign direct investment in Vietnam: Is there any evidence of technological spillover effects*. DEPOCEN Working Paper Series, Development and Policies Research Center (DEPOCEN), No. 216 Tran Quang Khai, Hanoi, Vietnam. Retrieved from <http://www.depocenwp.org>
- Oliver, D. (2002). *The US community college model and Vietnam's higher education system*. Paper presented at Texas Tech University Vietnam Centre's 4th triennial symposium, Lubbock, TX.
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2007). *Innovation and growth rationale for innovation strategy*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/31/39374789.pdf>
- Pham, T. H. (2008). *Higher education in Vietnam: A look from labour market angle*. Hanoi: Vietnam Development Forum. Retrieved from [http://www.vdf.org.vn/Doc/2008/VDFConf\\_WIPHuyen.pdf](http://www.vdf.org.vn/Doc/2008/VDFConf_WIPHuyen.pdf)
- Pham, T. H. (2013). *Human resource management in the transitional economy in Vietnam* (Master's thesis, University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki, Finland). Retrieved from [https://www.publications.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/53787/PhamThi\\_Hoe.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.publications.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/53787/PhamThi_Hoe.pdf?sequence=1)
- Prinianaki, J. (2004). Employability skills initiatives in higher education: What effects do they have on graduate labour market outcomes? *Education Economics, 17(1)*, 1-30.
- Sandra, H., & Jemina, N. (2013). *Research method and interpreting: A practical resource* (pp. 97-98). Bloomsbury Publishing Plc—1385 Broadway New York NY 10018 USA.
- Spencer, R., & Spencer, A. (2003). *Workplace basics: The skills employers want*. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.
- Stephen, W., Doughty, P., Gray, P. J., Hopcroft, J. E., & Silvera, I. F. (2006). *Observations on undergraduate education in computer science, electrical engineering, and physics at select universities in Vietnam*. Washington: Vietnam Education Foundation.
- TalkVietnam. (2015). *Employers give skilled applicants priority in hiring*. Retrieved July, 2015, from

- <https://www.m.talkvietnam.com/2015/07/employers-give-skilled-applicants-priority-in-hiring/>  
The World Bank. (2011). *International development association international bank for reconstruction and development international finance corporation multilateral investment guarantee agency*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam>
- The World Bank. (2016). *Overview (Vietnam)*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview>
- Tran, N. C. (2006). *Universities as drivers of the urban economies in Asia: The case of Vietnam*. Policy Research Working Paper: The World Bank.
- Tran, Q. T., & Swierczek. (2009). Skills development in higher education in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 15(4), 565-586. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602380802364175>
- Tran, T. T. (2010). *Enhancing graduate employability*. Paper presented at the 35th HERDSA Annual International Conference, 2-5 July 2012, Hobart, Australia.
- Valley, T. J., & Wilkinson, B. (2008). *Vietnamese higher education: Crisis and response*. Memorandum—Higher Education Task Force, Harvard Kennedy School, Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation. Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/innovations/asia/Documents/HigherEducationOverview112008.pdf>
- Vietnam Competiveness Report. (2010). *Vietnam's competitiveness agenda: From analysis to action* (Chapter 4. p. 112).
- Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training. (1997). *Tổng kết và đánh giá mười năm đổi mới giáo dục và đào tạo* [Summary and evaluation of Ten Years of Renovation in Education and Training]. Ministry of Education and Training, Hanoi.
- Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training. (2005b). *Vietnam higher education renovation agenda—Period 2006-2020*. Resolution No.14/2005/NQ-CP on the Fundamental and Comprehensive Reform of Higher Education in Vietnam 2006-2020.
- Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training. (2008a). *Directive on Promoting Teaching, Training and Applying ICT in Education—Period 2008-2012* (55/2008/CT-BGDĐT).
- Vietnamnet. (2011). *Công bố 500 DN lớn nhất Việt Nam năm 2011* [Announcement of the 500 biggest enterprises in 2011]. Retrieved from <http://www.vef.vn/2012/01/14/2012-01-14-cong-bo-500-dn-lon-nhat-viet-nam-nam-2011/> or <http://www.vnr500.com.vn/Charts/Index?chartId=&year=2011>
- Vietnamnet. (2012). *Soft Skills Now Taught at Universities*. Retrieved from <http://www.english.vietnamnet.vn/en/education/17710/soft-skills-now-taught-at-universities.html>
- Vu, Q. V. (2008). Giáo dục Việt Nam: Nguyên nhân của sự xuống cấp và các cải cách cần thiết [Vietnamese education: Downgrade causes and the necessary renovations]. *Thoi Dai Moi*, 13(3), 18.
- Vu, T., Rigby, B., Wood, L., & Daly, A. (2011). Graduate skills in business learning. *Asian Social Science*, 7(41), 2-11. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v7n4p2>