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Soft Skills as a Problem and a Purpose for Tanzanian Industry: Views of Graduates

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Abstract

Recently, the aim of enhancing graduate employability for industries has been constantly on the Tanzanian policy agenda and has been defined as one of the priorities of higher education. Yet much evidence suggests the skills mismatch and hiring talent is of great concern to employers around the globe. When it comes to 'hard' data with reference to 'soft' skills in the Tanzanian context, there is a dearth of empirically verifiable statistics from an academic standpoint. The study takes up this challenge to study what soft skills really mean to the end-users – 391 postgraduate students who are completing their studies at a Tanzanian public university and are working and / or preparing to enter the labour market. Findings indicate that equipping graduates with the soft skills required in a particular job or industry for today and those of tomorrow is a global challenge, in Tanzania it is even more worrisome. Based on the study findings, the study offers new insights into the importance of soft skills at the workplace as well as providing a foundation for universities to support the 'job-readiness' and 'employability' of graduates to meet industrial needs.

Keywords: *Soft Skills; Employability Skills; Graduates; Perceptions; Industry; Tanzania.*

JEL Classification: *I21; I25; I28.*

Introduction

Background of the study

The demands on universities to create a dynamic workforce has been acknowledged by both academicians and practitioners (International labour Office, 2012a, International labour office, 2012b, Mkude et al, 2003, Mirondo, 2017, World Bank, 2014). Labour market statistics indicate that over 800,000 young school leavers and graduates, migrants from rural to urban areas, all aged between 15-35 years enter the Tanzanian labour market (Mjema, 1999; Peter, 2013)**.** Regrettably and given the staggering level of unemployment among graduate job-seekers worldwide (International labour Office 2012a, International labour office 2012b, Mkude et al 2003, Mirondo, 2017, World Bank 2014), the Tanzania's education system's ethical imperative to deliver knowledge and skills for graduate to be prepared, resourceful and industry aware, has failed to make meaningful change to the on-going demands of employers. Worded differently,

graduates do not possess the employability skills required by the labour market (Mirondo 2017, Ndyali, 2016).

Whilst statistics on the number of graduates are hard to find in many developing countries, it is estimated that in 2014, there was 14,271 and 13,343 unemployed female and male graduate labour force entrants respectively (Tanzania Daily News, 2016). A professor from Ardhi University in Tanzania spoke of only 20 percent of the university graduates who get employed every year (Mwangonde, 2014). In Kenya, a university graduate job hunter on average will take five years to obtain employment (Omolo, 2010). These statistics can be understood through the lens of skills requirements in the labour market which are not compatible with skills supply. Worded different, there is a mismatch of skills. Undoubtedly, the skills requirements in the labour market are reflection of the global labour competitiveness (Schwab, 2015) which in turn embraces the following: rapid technology advances are impacting the world of work and skills. Others are a positive attitude to learning and vision of oneself, access to business and entrepreneurship development services and lastly a national priority for decent and productive employment for youth, vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Statement of the problem

In Tanzania, skills development is one of the most important points of discussion in the Tanzanian National Five Year Development Plan 2016/17-2020/21 (URT 2016) as the government is ambitiously seeking to achieve job creation and economic growth of which industries play major, transformational and complex roles. As noted by the World Economic Forum's (2018) Future of Jobs Report, it is difficult to survive without soft skills that are transferable between industries and occupations, in a business environment characterized by digital disruption, globalization and demographic shifts. For entrepreneurs and firms, it requires meeting customers' needs through meaningful communication and addressing complex and ambiguous challenges required in customer service and differentiation. For graduates looking for employment, soft skills will set them apart from other interviewees. At the workplace, having that "it factor" or soft skill will give the employee a competitive edge and contribution to overall staff and firm productivity. It is these soft skills that will finally make the difference between productive and counterproductive workplace and interviewing behaviours.

With this in mind, graduate employability has become a thorny issue in emerging economies like Tanzania since the literature is replete with reports and stories of the hardships experienced by graduates who are poorly prepared for the workplace and equipped with knowledge and skills for the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 that envisages to transform Tanzania into a strong and competitive middle income economy by 2025 (URT,2000). These narratives are repeated so frequently that the problems of half-baked university graduates employability have become common knowledge in society. The quality and relevance of Tanzanian universities are also not satisfactory and countries especially in developing countries rarely have national level graduate labour market statistics including occupation fields for those who are employed. In order to best prepare graduates for a competitive workplace, this gap or what is often referred to as the war for talent must be addressed.

It was also surprising to discover that there is very little in the way of rigorous research or even reliable basic information on the concept of soft skills developments from the graduate and or university student lens in Tanzania except for studies by Fulgence (2015), Nydayli (2016). In addition, studies which have naively overlooked the employment agenda in Tanzania must incorporate the authentic feedback of university learners as they transit into the world of work or after they have assumed professional responsibilities with a view to informing higher education practice and future planning. This justification forms the rationale for this study

Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following main objective which is to investigate soft skills as necessary employability skills for industries through the lens of graduates' perceptions. This objective is achieved by explaining the importance of soft skills in meeting the needs of industries and assessing how well prepared graduates are in terms of acquiring and practicing soft skills.

Literature Review

Defining soft skills

Descriptive reports and empirical studies (see Box 1) identify essential soft skills also referred to as non-technical skills, life skills, non-cognitive skills, generic skills, practical skills, capabilities, competencies that support career transition from higher education into employment from different stakeholders. These skills which are broad enough to remain useful in several industries or across different situations in work and in life, are different from hard skills also referred to as technical skills relate directly to specific occupations. Soft skills have also been criticized for their definition, scope, instrumentation and systematic education and training. (Collet *et al* 2015). Nonetheless soft skills as a topic is still trending.

Defining industry

There are loads of industry categorizations, in the contemporary economies, which are typically grouped into larger categories named sectors (Brown, 1954). For the purpose of this study, Industry is defined as an economic activity that is concerned with production of goods or the provision of services.

Box 1. Essential Soft Skills

communication skills (Ahmed, Capretz, & Campbell, 2012; Andrews & Higson, 2008; Business Council of Canada, 2016; Del Vitto, 2008; Dixon, et al., 2010; Lippman, et al., 2015; Marketwired, 2016; Mitchell, Skinner & White, 2010; Rego, 2017; Robles, 2012; Stuckey & Munro, 2014), teamwork (Ahmed, et al., 2012; Andrews & Higson, 2008; Business Council of Canada, 2016; Del Vitto, 2008; Dixon, et al., 2010; Marketwired, 2016; Mitchell, et al., 2010; Rego, 2017; Robles, 2012; Stuckey & Munro, 2014), problem solving (Ahmed, et al., 2012; Business Council of Canada, 2016; Dixon, et al., 2010; Mitchell, et al., 2010; Stuckey & Munro, 2014), decision-making (Dixon, et al., 2010), working under pressure (Dixon, et al., 2010), professionalism (Rego, 2017; Robles, 2012), dependability/reliability (Marketwired, 2016), motivation (Marketwired, 2016), commitment (Marketwired, 2016), relationship building skills (Business Council of Canada, 2016), critical thinking (Lippman, et al., 2015; Mitchell, et al., 2010; Stuckey & Munro, 2014), cross-cultural sensitivity and knowledge (Del Vitto, 2008; Mitchell, et al., 2010), social awareness (Del Vitto, 2008), business acumen and sense of entrepreneurship (Del Vitto, 2008), positive self-concept (Lippman, et al., 2015), self-control (Lippman, et al., 2015), social skills (Ahmed, et al., 2012; Lippman, et al., 2015; Robles, 2012), organizational skills (Ahmed, et al., 2012; Mitchell, et al., 2010;), being a fast learner (Ahmed, et al., 2012;), being an independent worker (Ahmed, et al., 2012;), being innovative (Ahmed, et al., 2012; Andrews & Higson, 2008), adaptability to change (Ahmed, et al., 2012;), having ethics/integrity (Mitchell, et al., 2010, Robles, 2012), leadership (Mitchell, et al., 2010), flexibility (Robles, 2012), courtesy/customer service skills (Mitchell, et al., 2010, Robles, 2012), and work ethic (Robles, 2012).

Source: Futureworx, 2018.

Theories guiding the study

There exist many theories that can shed light into the objectives of the study. The below theories predict a better position in the labour market for university graduate job seekers.

HCT which was developed in the early 1960s by Gary Becker, asserts the following (Becker, 1994): (i) By attending university, graduates will be provided with knowledge and skills as future workers in academic and non-academic contexts; (ii) The efficiency of the labour market will allocate the educated employees to firms and jobs as required and (iii) Firms are more willing to pay higher wages to individuals (graduates) who are better educated and more productive

Researchers have criticized the Becker's HCT for ignoring restrictions on the ability of graduates to position themselves competitively when applying for jobs. These criticisms or restrictions or options which also explain how education is connected to the labour market are elaborated as follows:

- Education is necessary but not a sufficient condition for economic growth: A better predictor of schooling and employment success, according to Bowles and Gintis (1976) is non-cognitive skills and not IQ or years of university academic degree experience.
- Labour markets which are influenced by complex processes and factors are not freely competitive. HTC assumes that graduates are in a market economy where there exists prefect competition, perfect market information and individuals in such a market are rational. If these were true, there would be no job-mismatch e.g. no over education or under-education (Dolton and Vignoles ,1997).
- The social capital theory challenges HCT by postulating that social ties and networks are good predictors for obtaining employment. In high social capital nations, graduates are more likely to perform academically compared to nations with low stocks of capital. (Coleman, 1990).
- Educational credentials or the insistence and overemphasis on academic and educational qualifications have become the currency for employment. Employers generally look for and screen on the basis of a completion of a degree in a particular discipline. Credential theory provides insights into the barriers facing individuals who lack degrees from an endorsed or accredited recognized university will face challenges in obtaining and maintaining employment. The subject matter may or may not be directly relevant to the labour market needs (Brown, 2003).
- Sociologists like Bourdieu (1986) argue that culture is a resource used commonly by elites to maintain privilege, power and prestige. Hiring of university degree holders is not simply based on an objective evaluation of credentials. Rather the job applicant is assessed based on his or her "fit" with the employer's cultures or worded differently the strategic interest of employers.
- In order to best prepare graduates for a competitive workplace, it is critical that students essentially begin their skill development (Figure 1) at Stage 1 ('unconscious incompetence' or ignorance), progressing to Stage 2 ('conscious incompetence' or discovery) and then passing to Stage 3 ('conscious competence or Practice') and ideally reaching mastery which is Stage 4 ('unconscious competence'). Lynch(2017) points out the "unconscious- incompetent" are the most dangerous and the most feared combination for the job market. It is thus critical that recent graduates have at least passed this level before assuming professional responsibilities. Traditional evaluation techniques (e.g. examinations), according to the same author, while potentially providing some feedback, do not formally examine or reinforce student consciousness.

Fig. 1. Noel Burch's Learning Stages Model

Source: Zaki, 2017.

It follows from the above that the employability of graduates can be understood as a complex set of interrelated factors comprising economic and professional contexts, individual trajectories and characteristics as well as teaching and learning at universities.

The importance and relevance of soft skills for work-ready graduates

In many developing economies of which Tanzania is part of, many job candidates lack workplace readiness skills. The research results by Linqvist and Westman (2011) reveal that soft skills are a strong predictor of an individual's workplace readiness. This is also supported by a 2014 World Bank study on Youth Development in Sub-Saharan Africa (see Figure 2) which argues that a multitude of African graduates must learn to sell themselves, no matter what, or they will either never find a job or fail to create one (Mutalemwa, 2020) .

Roble (2012) critically examines the importance and relevance of soft skills in the workplace whose environment is more demanding, more complex, more collaborative, and more diverse than ever before. Citing Klaus (2010), he reports that 75% of long-term workplace success in a continuously changing workplace environment is attributed to soft skills against technical knowledge and subject specific skills contributing a meagre 25%. Interestingly, Jackson and Chapman (2012) and Ilias et al. (2012) opine that cognitive skills are more important than non-cognitive skills.

In Tanzania, studies on employer and other stakeholders' perceptions on soft skills are limited. Notwithstanding this, a skills survey by the Government of Tanzania and UNIDO targeting 167 businesses in Tanzania reveals that employers were more satisfied with only two soft skills elements (communication and team work skills) and one hard skill element (academic learning) from their university educated workers' and there were still weaknesses in presentation, problem solving, initiative and analytical skills (UNIDO and URT, 2012).

Another in-depth survey conducted by a Tanzanian scholar (Mwita, 2018) reports that one hundred human resources practitioners considered Tanzanian graduates as average on both hard skills (understanding of concepts, breadth of knowledge, application of knowledge, and up-to-date) and soft skills (adaptability, attention to detail, commitment, integrity, initiative, self-awareness, punctuality, time management, tolerance to stress, work ethic, cooperation, IT skills, negotiation, problem solving, ethical, communication skills). Mwita (2018:269) poignantly notes: "Having graduates who are considered average may trigger unemployment in the country

since they will be unwanted by employers but also it may lead to preference of foreign employees to local employees".

A survey study conducted by the World Economic Forum (2018) reports on various soft skills in greatest demand and need in 2018 and 2022 (see Table 4) and also suggests jobs are influenced by soft skills as well as technical changes and development are capable of reducing, eliminating jobs and entirely creating new types of jobs.

Fig. 2. Graduates must learn to sell to either found a job or create a job

Source: Reproduced from Mutalemwa, 2020.

As the labour market is progressively looking for job applicants with high soft skills, the following are compelling reasons why employers and employees should value soft skills.

An in-depth UK research study published in 2015 sought to investigate the extent to which soft skills enable the UK economy to thrive now and in the future (Development Economics, 2015). The empirical analysis reveals that soft skills contribute to all parts of the UK economy, however its relevance is more felt in the following soft skills intensive sectors: the financial, business services, retail and public services including education and health. The research study also estimates that each year, the contribution in terms of gross value added of soft skills to the economy is over £ 88 billion, rising to £109 billion by 2020 and over £127 billion by 2025. The study also highlights soft skills deficits and shortages by 2020 leading to diminishing productivity, competitiveness and profitability, affecting over half a million UK workers.

Another empirical study conducted to build Australia's future workforce also provides insightful findings (Deloitte Access Economics, 2017): two thirds of all jobs will be soft skill intensive by 2030, most common soft skills are teamwork, digital and communications skills, that while the Australian workforce has a strong soft-skill base, demand for soft skills still exceeds supply, by up to 45, three quarters organizations report a soft skills gap, less than one percent on Australians' LinkedIn profile did not include soft skills and three quarters entry level vacancies could not be filled as job applicants lacked soft skills.

The acquisition and practice of soft skills at the workplace and before the workplace

Interest in the acquisition and practice of soft skills has intensified in recent years as higher learning institutions are under pressure as never before to prepare graduates as productive participants in the workforce. Probably the single most important question raised when reviewing the invaluable contributions in the current literature on the topic is: whose responsibility is it to build and implement soft skills effectively and as co-producers of employability skills which stakeholder is to ensure the workforce of the future has soft employability skills? Worded differently who should be responsible in closing the big gap between what has been taught at university and what is required for the workforce (Hughes and Barrie, 2010).

The answer to this question isn't straightforward. As aptly argued by practitioners and academicians any implementation of soft skills by stakeholders to help graduate thrive in work and life is highly context and country specific. In addition, the absence of an agreed definition of soft skills between students, academic and industry means that defining industry skills requirements is both essential and difficult (Collet et al, 2015). Consequently, the 'blame game' for the soft skill gap is frequently directed at government, higher learning institutions, employers, families and individuals. (Collet et al, 2015; Hurrel, 2016). These are briefly elaborated below:

At the national level, identifying and closing the soft skill gap will remain an uphill battle only when an individual government such as the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the whole government as well as other stakeholders take action with a shared purpose and implement systemic changes to prepare students for the jobs of today and the future (Richens, 1999).

At the university level, Holland and Beckett (2002) recommend that the teacher should assume multiple roles, such as mentor, facilitator and evaluator, thus demonstrating and modelling the utility of possessing soft skills. However, research results by Bolli and Renold (2017) reveal that universities face a comparative disadvantage in teaching soft skills for effective learning using the stand alone subject model or the embedded model as an integral part of a study program (Meeny and Kumar, 2009) To be more specific, Chan *et al* (2017) critically discuss three challenges of implementing a soft skill curriculum in terms of institutional and curriculum

support, conceptualization of soft skills, teaching pedagogy and assessment as well as academic staff and students' perceptions of soft skills. These challenges which are detailed in Table 1 suggest universities will not be able to prepare future employees for the jobs of the future. The search presented in the literature (Shakir, 2009; Allen and Eby, 2010; Grant et al, 2010; Maskasiranongh et al, 2011; Leong and Kavanagh, 2013; Gonzalez, 2013; Gribble, 2014) identify mentoring, work experience, lectures, experiential learning, self-assessment feedback, computer assisted learning, case studies and problem solving, extracurricular activities, field visits and industrial placements as vital learning methods for developing soft skills in graduates and therefore employability.

At the industry or workplace level, it has also been claimed that industry has poorly communicated the soft skills requirements to university and the responsibility to train graduate labour entrants is the responsibility of the industry (IPPMEDIA, 2016). Taking a critical perspective, Hurrel's study (2016) suggests that employees possess soft skills but decide to withdraw them because of disaffection with the workplace. As there is no "one-size-fits-all" in learning soft skills at the workplace, employers have adopted various appropriate strategies to help improve employee learning on soft skills including but not limited to formal and informal as well as structured and unstructured initiatives (Edwards and Hinchiffe, 2009; Junrat et al, 2014; Ahmad *et al*, 2017) Industry leaders and experts recommend using a blended learning approach that is supported by mentoring and coaching (Edwards and Hinchliffe, 2009).

At the individual level, many studies around the globe examine and explore the awareness on perceptions of soft skills gained by university students and graduates. (Rainsbury et al, 2002 Ahmad, 2013, Koloba, 2017; Stewart, 2017, Laari ad Dube, 2017, Laari and Dubere, 2017; Assan and Natulaaya, 2017). In the mind of these respondents, superior performers require competence in soft and hard skills and academic studies do not adequately equip learners with the world beyond university. In reviewing these studies, it is apparent the feedback of graduates can shed light on how soft skills can be best supported, encouraged and developed to improve graduate workforce development. Lastly, it is important to reiterate two points: firstly there exists a disconnection between student's self-assessments of their soft skills and their actual soft skill level, however Maina, (2018) found that postgraduate students are unlikely to overestimate their soft skills , unlike their undergraduate counterparts who have less exposure to the world of work and society and secondly, individuals are not "victims of the system" (Holmes,2013, P. 549)) but have a degree of control over their employment. Individuals must be willing and committed to expand, improve and develop themselves.

At the family level, research has shown that parent's involvement in children learning is one key driver for improving children's academic success and long-term well-being. However, information and access to soft skills under the framework of emotional intelligence is a challenge for parents and caregivers (Rock and Crow, 2017).

Table 1. Obstacles to the implementation of soft skills in higher education

Lack of institutional and curriculum support	**Operational challenges: conceptualisation, teaching pedagogy and assessment**	**Lecturers' and students' attitudes and perceptions of soft skills development**
• Lack of recognition of the importance of soft skills in universities • Diverse views on the purposes of higher education in an era of massification of higher education • Out-of-date curriculums and curriculums that do not align with employers' demands • Discrepancies between the intellectual orientation of universities and practical goals of employers • Lack of professional development provided to academic staff • No reward for high quality teaching	• Lack of clarity about the conceptualisation/definition of generic competencies as a conceptual base • Soft skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication are conceptualised and taught differently in different disciplines • Academic staff , while experts in their own discipline, often do not have the experience or knowledge to fully introduce, teach and assess soft skills despite also recognising the importance and need to do so • The traditional reward system encourages academics to undertake research and publish within their disciplines • Academic staff are not encouraged to spend time on the improvement of teaching let alone on soft skills • Lack of resources and dedicated support centre for soft skill development and teaching • Students unaware of the soft skills they develop as they are not made explicit in lectures	• Lecturers perceive that it is not their role to teach for employment purpose • Lecturers unwilling to deviate from traditional teaching approaches • Changing teaching approaches may not be received favourably by students and teaching evaluation will affect promotion and contract • Lecturers unwilling to undertake professional development • Curriculum is already packed Lecturers give priority to research and publication which determine university's promotion and awards • Exam-oriented culture encourages students to focus on academic achievements rather than whole-person development • Students often come across to notice the significance of generic competencies or work skills after graduating from universities

Source: Chan, 2017:7-8.

Methodology

The research objectives for this study were answered with data collected from desktop review and questionnaire survey which gathered the opinions, beliefs and feelings of 391 purposefully selected postgraduate students enrolled for a Master degree in a public Tanzanian university. The study was implemented at one of the three campuses of the University offering only Master degree programs. Choosing one of the most established public universities in Tanzania enhances the research data by reflecting the perspectives of postgraduates students from the university. At the same time, the suitable location and comfortable setting of the University greatly allowed the research to progress smoothly as the authors are employees of the University.

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

Data analysis is based on 391 completely filled in survey forms. The demographics characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 2. In terms of gender, more male respondents (53.2%) took part than their female counterparts (46.8%). The students who participated in the study were enrolled on the following taught postgraduate degrees, specifically a master degree in Business Administration Corporate Management (26%), Accounts and Finance (11.3%), Human resource Management (14.8%), Applied Economics and Business (3.1%), Public Administration (13%), Marketing Management (4.1%), Procurement and Supply Chain Management (18.2%). The highest education achieved before joining their current university is an undergraduate degree (88.2%) followed by a master degree (11.8%). Industry composition of survey respondents was diverse, with 15 industries represented. In terms of employment status, the majority are employed by the Government (43.7%), followed by the private sector (30.2%) and the remaining are unemployed (26.1%).

Concept of soft skills

Although a large number of definitions may be found in the literature on the concept of soft skills, respondents opined that soft skills allude to interpersonal skills (52.9%), character development (24.8%) Life skills (26.3%). This findings suggest that most of the respondents were aware of soft skills and that these skills share several purposes: Better work performance 39.9(%), increase confidence (32.2%) better performance in Interviews (36.1%), Better Application of knowledge and skills (34.3%), Better adaptability to change(33%), and holistic growth (12.8%). It should be mentioned here that the percentage does not add to 100 percent as respondents were allowed multiple choices.

Responsibility of developing soft skills

Selecting all that apply, the responsibility of soft skills development according to the respondents lies with employers (42.2%), students (38.9%), employees (38.4%), Government (32%), families (15.3%) and donors (2.8%).

The most popular response corroborates the idea raised by Hurrel (2016) and IPPMEDIA (2016) that poor HR practices (recruitment, selection and training) in organizations contribute to the widening gap between graduate soft skills and employer expectations. Employees will therefore not deliver what is expected from them. This also underscores the importance of individuals developing soft skills prior to employment as few resources will be spent once on the job and why unemployed graduates have pointed the finger at employers for shunning them in preference of less educated but experienced workers. However, students and employees still need to take responsibility themselves for their lack of soft skills and work to improve them.

Table 2. Demographic of the respondents

1. SEX	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	183	53.2
Female	208	46.8
Total	**391**	**100**
2. AGE	**Frequency**	**Percent**
18-25	50	12.8
26-35	149	38.1
36-45	130	33.2
46-55	56	14.3
56-65	6	1.5
Total	**391**	**100**

Table 2 (cont.)

3. PROGRAM OF STUDY	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Master of Science in Business Administration Corporate Management	135	26
Master of Science in Accounting and Finance	44	11.3
Master of Science in Human Resource Management	58	14.8
Master of Science in Applied Economics and Business	12	3.1
Master of Science in Public Administration	51	13
Masters of Science in Marketing Management	16	4.1
Master of Science in Procurement and Supply Chain Management	71	18.2
Total	**391**	**100**
4. HIGHEST EDUCATION	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Undergraduate Degree	345	88.2
Master degree	46	11.8
Total	**391**	**100**
5. EMPLOYMENT STATUS	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Government	171	43.7
For Profit Making	100	25.6
Not for Profit Making	18	4.6
Unemployed	102	26.1
Total	**391**	**100**
6. INDUSTRY SECTOR	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Government/Public Sector	164	41.9
Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	**3**	**0.8**
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	4	1
Construction	4	1
Finance and Insurance	27	6.9
Health Care & Social Assistance	11	2.8
Information	15	3.8
Management of Companies and Enterprises	5	1.3
Manufacturing	6	1.5
Mining	2	0.5
Professional Scientific and Technical Services	2	0.5
Real estate and Rental and Leasing	3	0.8
Transportation and Warehousing	14	3.6
Trade (Wholesale and Retail)	6	1.5
Other services except Public Administration	12	3.1
I am currently not working	103	26.3
Total	**391**	**100**

Source: Field Data, 2020.

Preferred mode of soft skills learning

Post graduate students expressed their preferred modes of soft skills learning (in ascending order) as follows: Mentoring sessions by experts (63.2%), Classroom lecture method (23%), Self-study using online facility (19.4%), Learning from colleagues (18.7%) Self-training through reading books (17.1%) real project-/Assignment-based method (15.1%);Play role/Presentation Method (15.6%), Use of formal online courses (7.4%). The leading response mentoring sessions by experts which is consistent with data obtained in Ahmad et al (2017) has been found to advance as well as improve the educational, professional, personal growth of an individual.

Learning methodologies in soft skills learning at the workplace

Postgraduate students who are employed and make up 73.9 % of the sample were asked to identify the ways in which their workplace intentionally seeks to develop and enhance soft skills which could result in improved job performance. These are: Coaching (45.5%); Group Workshops (22%); Long-term, in-depth support (e.g. training over three months or more) (21%); Short-term, as-needed support (e.g. mentoring, referrals to resources) (16.1%),Our own structured training program (15.9%) ; Online learning opportunities 12%; A structured training

program developed by someone else (10%); Short talks or sessions (10%). Employed respondents (2.6%) also indicated that their workplace does not intentionally seek to develop soft skills.

Coaching topped the list and this is not surprising given that it can lead employees (e.g. high potentials, executives, problem employees) to feel more emotionally engaged with their job as well as wanting to remain, learn and grow.

Improving the employability of graduates

According to the respondents, actions should be taken to improve the employability of graduates by: making courses and curriculum more relevant to the requirements of employers (49.6%) ; developing better information about future workforce demand (47.8%); Providing support to graduates after they have obtained their degrees e.g. facilitate relations between graduates and enterprises (33%); including practical classes in courses offered by higher learning institutions (22%) and lasting including compulsory work placement with professionals (16.6%). These results have also been expressed in studies mentioned in the literature review chapter.

Perception of theoretical and practical skills

Having the right mix of skills is crucial to the success of individuals, businesses, and societies. Both hard and soft skills are greatly desired by employers around the world. According to the mean ratings shown in Table 3, (where 1 = very poor, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = over average, 5 = exceptional) the prevalent feelings among the enrolled students (over 60%) are that employability skills are average, specifically:

- Theoretical skills of University graduates in Tanzania is below average (M = 2.99 SD = .705)
- Soft skills of University graduates in Tanzania are average (M = 2.93 SD = .638)
- Respondent's soft skill today is average (M = 3.16 SD = .635)
- Respondent's soft skills before enrolling on a master degree is average (M = 3.15 SD = .678)
- Respondent's soft skills after completing their master degree will be average (M = 3.47 SD = .815).

These findings are a cause for concern and are consistent with those Mwita's (2018). Students leave university underprepared for the challenges of society and the workforce. Being average, Tanzanian graduates' skills are unlikely to result in world changing accomplishments. These findings raise serious questions about whether the ideal learning ground for skills development is the university or the workplace which in turn raises also serious questions about the curriculum or when self-reporting soft skills, students may overestimate their skills (Maina, 2018). It can be suggested that postgraduate students in the study are at the stage 2 (Conscious Incompetence – You are aware of the skills but not yet proficient) of the Noel Burch's Learning Stages Model explained in the Literature Review. The same theory also sheds light in understanding the findings in Table 4.

Table 3. Perception on Subject specific Skils and soft skills by employment sector

Employment by:		How would you rate subject specific skills of university graduates in Tanzania?	How would you rate soft skills of university graduates in Tanzania:	How would you rate your soft skills today?	How would you rate your soft skills before joining your current University?	How will you rate your soft skills after completing your University degree at your current University?
Government	Mean	2.97	2.92	3.11	3.15	3.55
	N	171	171	171	171	171
	Std. Deviation	.698	.608	.558	.614	.806
Private for Profit Making	Mean	2.91	2.89	3.13	3.06	3.36
	N	100	100	100	100	100
	Std. Deviation	.605	.650	.691	.679	.847
Private Not for Profit Making	Mean	3.17	3.06	3.33	3.28	3.56
	N	18	18	18	18	18
	Std. Deviation	.786	.802	.840	1.074	.784
Unemployed	Mean	3.07	2.95	3.23	3.21	3.42
	N	102	102	102	102	102
	Std. Deviation	.787	.651	.659	.694	.801
Total	Mean	2.99	2.93	3.16	3.15	3.47
	N	391	391	391	391	391
	Std. Deviation	.705	.638	.635	.678	.815

Source: Field data (2020)

The study further submitted these variables with average mean ratings to a correlation analysis. In all cases, there was a statistically weak significant correlation in the following:

- Subject specific skills of Tanzanian university graduates and soft skills of Tanzanian university graduates (rs =.412, p = .000);
- Subject specific skills of Tanzanian university graduates and my soft skills today (rs =.166, p = .001);
- Subject specific skills of Tanzanian university graduates and my soft skills before joining my current University (rs =.158, p = .002);
- Subject specific skills of Tanzanian university graduates and my soft skills after completing my postgraduate degree (rs = .165, p = .001);
- Soft skills of Tanzanian university graduates and my soft skills today (rs = .285, p = .000);
- Soft skills of Tanzanian university graduates and my soft skills before joining my current university (rs = .213, p = .000);
- My soft skills today and my soft skills before my current University (rs = .369, p = .000);
- My soft skills today and my soft skills after completing studies at my current university (rs = .359, p = .000);
- Soft skills before joining my current university and soft skills after completing studies at my current university (rs = .432, p = .000).

The above Spearman's rho yielded results indicating that students who perceive their academic experience as enhancing their theoretical skills, will also perceive their degrees as being characterized by the development of soft /workplace skills. Students who are less confidence

about their soft skills prior to joining a degree program are also less confident about their soft skills at the end of their academic degree.

Importance of Soft skills as perceived at the individual level and for the workplace

The respondents in the study were aware of the importance of soft skills. When asked , in the future, how important do you think having strong soft skills will be within the Tanzania society, 78.3% said more important than they are today, 18.9% said as important as they are today and the remaining (2.8%) said less important than they are today.

The list of 16 soft skills used in this study was based on a report produced by World Economic Forum (2018) which has been looking ahead to the future of work, trying to predict the soft skills in greatest demand and need for potential hires, employees and companies. Respondents in this study were asked to rate the importance of these skills for themselves and for the Tanzanian workplace.

According to the descriptive findings of this study (see Table 4) no soft skills were identified as Not At All Important, Slightly Important and Fairly Important. The mean scores ranging between 4 and 5 were (very) important at the individual level and for the Tanzanian workplace.

In today's fast changing techno-economic and competitive environment, the most important soft skill identified at the individual level was Trustworthiness and for the Tanzanian workplace is Analytical Thinking. Both skills have an important contribution to national growth and prosperity. It could mean that if individuals are able to fulfill the job requirement by being reliable, responsible, dependable, honest, ethical and fulfilling obligations, the industry/workplace will be satisfied which will allow graduates to progress in their careers.Trust forms a foundation for functioning relationships and co-operation. Analytical skills are a powerful commodity for the Tanzanian workplace to increase the efficiency of work, processes, and technology driven by competitive and performance pressures.

The same table also indicates that with a mean score of greater than 4, Trustworthiness, Reasoning, Idea Generation, Creativity, Coordination and Time Management, are the five highest-ranking skills, although all are clearly necessary for success. On the other hand, Analytical Thinking, Reasoning, Complex Problem Solving, Idea Generation and Critical Thinking and Analysis are the most valued skills for the Tanzanian workplace.

It can also be seen from Table 4 that graduates are in agreement in terms of sharing the same rank order with the following two skills at the individual level and workplace level: Reasoning (ranked second) and Idea Generation (ranked fourth). It can be argued that degree programs need to be more relevant and do more to develop these skills that will help learners succeed now and, in the future, as previous findings from the field data indicate that graduates rate their soft and hard skills as average.

Looking at Table 5, it is also apparent that Analytical Thinking is the most valued soft skill by Government and for profit making employees. Graduates working for the not for profit sector selected Leadership and Social Influence as their most important skill against Idea Generation for unemployed graduates.

Table 4. The importance of soft skills at the individual level and at the workplace (N = 391)

Ranking	Soft skill dimension	Individual		Ranking	Soft skill dimension	Workplace	
		Mean	SD			Mean	SD
1.	Trustworthiness	4.42	0.8	1	Analytical thinking	4.51	0.82
2.	Reasoning	4.4	0.82	2	Reasoning	4.5	0.74
3.	Coordination and time management	4.39	0.78	3	Complex problem solving	4.49	0.75
4.	Idea generation	4.39	0.8	4	Idea generation	4.47	0.77
5.	System analysis and evaluation	4.38	0.77	5	Critical thinking and analysis	4.47	0.79
6.	Emotional intelligence	4.38	0.81	6	System analysis and evaluation	4.45	0.79
7.	Creativity	4.38	0.85	7	Coordination and time management	4.44	0.78
8.	Leadership and social influence	4.37	0.79	8	Technological design and programming	4.43	0.76
9.	Technological design and programming	4.33	0.84	9	Leadership and social influence	4.43	0.82
10.	Active learning and learning strategies	4.29	0.85	10	Creativity	4.4	0.8
11.	Attention to detail	4.29	0.86	11	Active learning and learning strategies	4.39	0.78
11.	Critical thinking and analysis	4.29	0.86	12	Trustworthiness	4.38	0.85
12.	Analytical thinking	4.27	0.9	13	Emotional intelligence	4.38	0.84
13.	Initiative	4.26	0.89	14	Attention to detail	4.34	0.82
14.	Complex problem solving	4.25	0.82	15	Initiative	4.34	0.82
15.	Originality	4.18	0.9	16	Originality	4.25	0.87
	Valid N (listwise)	391				391	

Source: Field Data, 2020.

Table 5. The importance of Soft Skills at the Workplace by Employment

Employment by		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Govt	Mean	4.57	4.56	4.53	4.40	4.43	4.26	4.35	4.39	4.38	4.35	4.41	4.44	4.52	4.45	4.44	4.44
	N	171	171	171	171	171	171	171	171	171	171	171	171	171	171	171	171
	Std. Deviation	.736	.736	.777	.786	.790	.883	.821	.792	.882	.850	.859	.848	.777	.848	.775	.805
For Profit	Mean	4.60	4.49	4.57	4.48	4.47	4.28	4.47	4.39	4.53	4.53	4.55	4.54	4.54	4.53	4.45	4.51
	N	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	Std. Deviation	.711	.643	.640	.659	.745	.780	.758	.737	.674	.658	.657	.642	.642	.643	.687	.674
Non Profit	Mean	4.50	4.44	4.39	4.39	4.28	4.28	4.22	4.56	4.28	4.33	4.67	4.39	4.50	4.56	4.50	4.39
	N	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
	Std. Deviation	.707	.616	.778	.850	.826	.752	.808	.616	.826	.907	.594	.698	.707	.616	.786	.850
Unemployed	Mean	4.34	4.37	4.28	4.28	4.30	4.19	4.22	4.15	4.25	4.27	4.32	4.34	4.41	4.43	4.38	4.40
	N	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Std. Deviation	1.029	.889	.905	.860	.854	.941	.908	.927	.930	.956	.903	.777	.788	.790	.797	.847
Total	Mean	4.51	4.49	4.47	4.39	4.40	4.25	4.34	4.34	4.38	4.38	4.43	4.44	4.50	4.47	4.43	4.45
	N	391	391	391	391	391	391	391	391	391	391	391	391	391	391	391	391
	Std. Deviation	.819	.754	.787	.780	.797	.866	.831	.815	.848	.841	.817	.775	.744	.774	.758	.786

1=Analytical Thinking, 2=Complex Problem Solving, 3= Critical Thinking and Analysis, 4=Active Learning and Learning Strategies, 5=Creativity, 6=Originality, 7=Initiative, 8=Trustworthiness, 9= Attention to Detail, 10= Emotional Intelligence, 11= Leadership and Social Influence, 12= Coordination and Time Management, 13= Reasoning, 14=Idea Generation,15=Technological Design and Programming ,16=System Analysis and Evaluation

Source: Field data, 2020.

Concluding Remarks

The world of work and society expect that the higher the level of training, the higher will be the skill possessed by the labour force of any country, which in turn has implications for the overall development of the economy. Equipping graduates with the soft skills required in a particular job or industry for today and those of tomorrow is a global challenge, in Tanzania it is even more worrisome. Based on the survey results and in the context of the study's agenda, the following recommendations are put forward to recognize the value of soft skills and their impact on the workplace and build confident graduates who are able to function effectively, efficiently and responsibly. These are:

- The human capital required by industry is supplied by institutions of higher education which should ensure provision of skills and knowledge is responsive to their needs and forward-looking in a competitive learning market. It should be less biased towards the development of job specific hard skills and hands on learning that mirrors problems and work opportunities in an interdisciplinary way are centrally important for human capital development and workforce success in Tanzania.
- The human capital theory has not been capable of offering a convincing explanation in explaining the soft skills gaps raised by the respondents. There is a need to extend the theory from its predominantly economic-based origins so that it takes serious account of historical, geographical, cultural, and social-psychological factors.

- In order to propel change in organizations and stand out in the crowd, present-day employers should go the extra mile in identifying the learning methodologies that contribute most to the employee's work performance and also taking account the new possibilities offered by technology.
- For making soft skills development programmes more effective, institutions are using different approaches in teaching or training soft skills development. What is important about the learning methodologies is what they help the learner to do, know or understand.
- The provision of high-quality information, advice and guidance can help shape learner demand and career choices, better aligning them with the current and future requirements of the labour market. Attracting industrialists who have significant experiences and qualifications to introduce and or impact soft skills in courses that are relevant, authentic and well aligned with the curriculum.
- If Government's efforts are limited by lack of funds, the Government should commit to support soft skill development by fostering a culture of partnership and co-operation in order to achieve successful integration of soft skills at the university and workplace. This will help to address the increasing number of university educated unemployed.
- Solving future skills challenges will necessitate that policymakers, educators and employers adopt a quicker, more flexible and collaborative ability to respond and will also need to reconsider whether they have the right tools and relationships to succeed.

Limitations and Future Research

Results should be interpreted paying attention to the sample which consisted of only 391 students enrolled at one University, and the self-report methodology also limits the generalization of the current findings. The results must be viewed as indicative only. An interesting avenue that could be explored in future research is the use of longitudinal and qualitative data.

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