

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction, problem statement and the research objectives of the research. The significance and scope of the research and the research methodology are presented as well.

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, it has become important for a graduate to possess marketable skills and be able to showcase their marketability so as to have a greater edge than the other counterparts in getting employment. As a result, acquiring knowledge and specific job skills have become the main objectives for students in the universities. This is because the basic elements which assist graduates in meeting up with these demands are the marketability skills and personalities that are being taught during tertiary education (Robinson & Garton, 2007).

Marketability refers to how desirable a candidate is for employment consideration and what he or she is worth as a prospective hire (Bruce, 2015). It also refers to the ability of a graduate to bridge the gap between the job market and education. Graduate marketability is a key measurement of the effort of any university in human resources development (Kee et al, 2012) as the graduates are the human capital that is generated from the university's effort to increase manpower value for the job market. However, despite the fact that many graduates try to meet up with all these requirements, they are still lacking to market themselves to prospective employers.

Unemployment has been stated to be an issue that is related with the marketability of graduates (Ahmad et al, 2014). One crucial reason is the wide communication gap between the universities and employers which affect the graduates as they are not aware of many employers' requirements and so do not meet up with their requirements (Singh & Singh, 2008; Tran, 2015). For example, possession of employment skills are required for graduates to have better chances of marketability. Kee et al (2012) in their study determined that graduates need to be equipped with communication, innovation, teamwork, leadership, critical and problem-solving skills among others to assist in improving their marketability. The other crucial reason is the lack of co-operation between them to work together in helping graduates to market themselves to increase their chances of getting jobs (Eurobarometer, 2010). It is suggested that the universities, graduates, employers and other related stakeholders such as government or educational policy makers should develop mutual understanding and collaborate to facilitate graduate marketability (Tran, 2015).

As the internet has become a fast and easy method of disseminating information to different kinds of people at the same time, it has become an easy way of helping graduates to find jobs through the use of portals. However, most of these existing portals focus more on helping applicants to search and apply for jobs (Mansourvar, 2011) rather than assisting them in showcasing their marketability or verifying provided information among other things.

This thesis therefore examined marketability problem of graduates and how it can be reduced by proposing an integrated portal that will address the gap between graduates, employers and their universities and assist graduates in marketing themselves to prospective employers.

Problem Statement

In this thesis, the problem to be addressed is on how to facilitate graduate marketability through the integration of features in a proposed integrated portal.

The need to improve graduate marketability has become very crucial as graduates need to be able to keep up with the changes in the different work environments, and be able to show to the prospective employers that they have the skills and requirements which they are looking for. As the employers keep bringing out the lists of desirable characters they want in prospective employees planning to work for them (Hager et al, 2002; Wilton, 2012), the need for the graduates to be made aware of and to know what requirements the employers want has become a necessity. In order to aid in the marketability of graduates, it is likewise important that there should be a strong link between the universities, their graduates and the prospective employers so that information such as graduates' portfolios and job requirements by employers can be shared and verified. This comes from the fact that Mansourvar (2011) reported that majority of the fresh graduates are unemployed because the employers identified that most do not have marketability skills needed in the industries. Gatabazi (2015) also recommended the collaboration between universities and prospective employers through upgrading college programmes to produce qualified graduates and enhance their marketability. This thesis therefore addressed the graduate marketability problem and suggested how it can be facilitated through the use of the proposed integrated portal.

1.2 Research Objectives

This thesis proposed an integrated portal that may facilitate graduate marketability and improve collaboration between employers, graduates and the universities. The objectives of this research are:

- To identify the user requirements of all stakeholders which will be incorporated into the integrated portal
- To develop an integrated portal to facilitate graduate marketability
- To evaluate if the portal satisfies its user requirements

1.4 Significance of the Research

The significance of the research was to meet the graduates' need for an integrated platform in the form of a web portal that may facilitate their marketability and assist the employers to graduates' verified information such as their resumes. The portal will also assist in bridging the gap between the universities, employers and graduates by sharing verified information between stakeholders. Hence, the research focused on providing a way to facilitate graduate marketability by its integrated features such as showcasing of graduates' achievements to employers, providing graduates with employers' job requirements information, verification of graduates through provision of reference and attestation letters by lecturers, improving the collaboration between the university, graduates and employers, thereby bringing together verified information into an integrated portal.

1.5 Scope of the Research

This study concentrates on identifying the user requirements of all stakeholders of the integrated portal, develops an integrated portal that can be used to

facilitate marketability and evaluate the use of the integrated portal in facilitating graduate marketability.

1.6 Research Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives of this research, a quantitative research approach was used. This involves the use of two survey questionnaires to obtain information for identifying the user requirements of all stakeholders of the proposed integrated portal and to evaluate the portal after it has been developed and implemented. The target populations for this research are the graduates, the lecturers and the employers.

1.7 Thesis Organization

This research is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction of the research, the problem statements, research objectives, significance of the research, scope of the research and research methodology.

Chapter two presents the literature review on graduate marketability problems, e-portfolio and its use, user requirement analysis and the existing portals which are related to my work and their limitations.

Chapter three focuses on the methodology used in this research and discusses the approach used.

Chapter four discusses the result of the user requirements surveys, data analysis of the obtained data and the identification of the user requirements of all stakeholders.

Chapter five provides discussion on the integrated portal prototype design and implementation.

Chapter six presents the results of the evaluation survey carried out and the analysis and discussion of the result.

Finally, Chapter seven gives a summary of the thesis and research conclusion and likewise presents a summary on the developed prototype portal and future recommendations.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter presents the background of the research for example the problem of graduate marketability and its impact on inability of graduates to gain employment. The objectives of the research, significance of the research, scope of the research, research methodology and thesis organization are presented as well.