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Academic stream and employability skills among university students

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Abstract

The present study assesses the job skills of university science and arts stream students, respectively. A descriptive survey investigation was undertaken for this study G.M. The participants were 100 students of provide us a balanced sample from each subject taught in university To test their abilities, the researcher applied overall Employability Assessment Inventory made by Larry Dershem, in 2016. The made up of six major modules, namely, self-concept, self-control, social engagement, communication, problem solving and job searching skills. They provide you with a set of 24 questions. The researchers analyzed the data using the percentage and t test. According to the research, 17% of children were high on self-concept, self-control, social skills, and communication. According to the survey 18% believed that they had more problem-solving skills as contrasted with only 13% who thought they had good job finding skills. In comparison to arts students, science students from the same stream were found to be more employable. This was seen to be significantly true at 0.01 level in the two dimension.

As a result, the findings propose that higher education cultivators and policy makers ought to pay more attention to the inclusion of practice-relevant as well as skill-based components in the higher education curricula. When students receive such opportunities their employability and availability for work increases.

Keywords: Employability skills, science vs arts students, higher education, descriptive survey, skill assessment, curriculum development, university graduates, t-test analysis

1. Introduction

Employment opportunities for graduates are a crucial measure, not just of whether or not it goes on to get a job, but also of how well they keep and develop their career in a competitive and changing world. A combination of competencies that covers the range of knowledge, skills and personal attributes that improved his/her ability to work effectively in various work settings and to successfully manage their transition into the workforce. According to Pool and Sewell (2007) ^[10] "Technical knowledge or academic performance should not be the whole content of 'soft skills'. Workplace readiness is about so much more: attitude, flexibility, communication skills, and problem solving. Billions of dollars are poured into universities for a variety of tangible and intangible reasons. However, it is safe to say that probably one of the main objectives is for parent's children to become 'career ready' graduates. Employers are increasingly expecting a new breed of graduate with the likes of good communication skills, leadership, cooperation, creativity and perseverance (Buheji & Buheji, 2020) ^[3]. Universities need to produce graduates with both the disciplinary knowledge and the breadth of employability skills. Today's scholars and universitaires are more than just theorising mills: They are human capital factories. They train students to face the challenges of globalisation, volatile economies and technological advances. Weligamage (2009) ^[17] was vindicated in arguing that educational institutions are the ones who are now being forced by the industry to include employability skills in the curriculum. Then, students can connect what they learn in the classroom to how it is used in the workplace. The concept of Employability started in the western world, now it is getting pace in Indian context

Justification of the Study

Schools are being named learning-to-teach organizations and teaching skills for life in a real-world university. Today's universities are more concerned with producing capable engaged and highly employable students. These are the people that have to quickly adapt to the conditions of the global job market. As the world is becoming self-reliant financially and

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working towards sustainable development, human capital is getting more and more important. The opportunity to impart job-related skills is an important goal not just for educational institutions but also for nations as the progress of a nation largely depends on the capabilities of its trained citizens. The people who worked for various establishments are their alumni, including dignitaries. As we anticipate that university graduates will contribute to economic development and social development as employees, so we expect they will as entrepreneurs, who create jobs. Students ought to leave with an expectation that they should be able to go out and do their careers, know what they're doing, be practical and be flexible.

College Secretary's Challenge Report card for college Secretary's Challenge is complex. It is to "keep up with and exceed" the work-related skill set of college students. Some of the many skills people need to do their jobs and find meaning in their work are communication, collaboration, creativity, problem-solving, flexibility, and digital literacy. The focus of the study is to assess the employability skills of the students of different educational streams.

It is meant to examine them in terms of strengths and weaknesses and skill gap.

Findings of the study will open up avenues for practical skill-oriented teaching methods in a concentrated manner for school teachers, education policy makers, and curriculum developers; through bringing about cognitive, educational, political implications and contributions. The objective of the study is not only to be helpful in education theoretically. And this thinking would focus more on practical studies for both individual and national advancement.

Problem Statement: In the age of rapid technology changes and the influence of globalization, even a mere bachelor's is sometimes not enough for a job. Today's employers expect theoretical knowledge along with practical experience. At the workplace success digital literacy, critical thinking, leadership, adaptability and communicating rated more highly of employability traits. Universities are faced with the challenge of developing ways to address the growing gaps between general education and employable skills as industry seasons change.

Questions like these are being raised in these our times: Are college graduates job-ready? Rainfall Inhomogeneity An important issue is how well graduates will cope with a changing workplace. In this context, it refers that how far adapting abilities are specific to each profession. When it comes to accepting fresh graduates for jobs, there are questions of pedagogy, curriculum design, practical exposure etc. and different streams like arts, science, commerce and professional course which can influence how ready for the profession the students are. These new members of the workforce are also representative of the education systems in which they have studied. Similar realities prevailed in most advanced countries. All this shaped the differences of opinion which emerged regarding their readiness.

Based on these guidelines, the present research was framed by the following questions.

To what extent do recent college graduates exhibit strong employability skills?

A major area of study is the impact of the academic stream on students' employability skills.

We can decrease the gap for demands between instruction in schools and requirements in industries after this problem has been solved. It is expected that the outcome of this study

may give contribution to the improvement of the education program in the university so that the graduates have sufficient skills needed in the work field.

Research Objectives

1. To Assess the Employability Skill Profile of University Graduates.
2. To Compare Employability Skills Across Academic Disciplines.

Research Hypothesis

H₁: There is a statistically significant difference in the employability skills of graduate students from Science and Arts streams.

Delimitations of the Study

To maintain focus and conduct the research properly, this study intentionally limits distance education. The research is limited to the U.G. students of GM University. The research findings should be interpreted cautiously as information from other universities was not assessed. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other university students or similar fields of study. A different result could be had in a different academic environment.

The sample's size was small and included students in the Arts and Sciences Graduate programs. In order to enable a meaningful and focused comparison between the two preselected streams, i.e, Science and Arts, the study does not include students of commerce, engineering and other professional streams.

The suggested research will be a quantitative study, questionnaire method. The only data collected was from student responses to the questionnaire from this study. Faculty, prospective employers, and institutional records made no contributions. Not employing qualitative methods, such as interviews or case studies, inhibits the understanding of students' real life experience and the concretization of skills by practice.

2. Literature Review

The ability of graduates to be employed has been an issue of concern to educational theorists and policy-makers in many countries. The 2009 Weligamage literature review addressed Sri Lankan higher education and discussed international trends while informing higher education institution (HEI) reform for skills enhancement provision to reconceptualise in response to global labor market evolution in the future. (40 words) Such expectations vary widely from one country to another.

Jackson (2013) ^[7] examined the impact of WIL on 131 undergraduate students who were looking for a job. Research in this area indicates that students do not learn skills because they are not taught. BesD students, as well as academic-related issues, affect their learning of skills in an online environment. Findings will be discussed further as part of the report. Key influences were gender, care major, and time in the field. Students who worked part time were more active and used greater job search skills compared to students from the fields of business, education, and engineering. Greater use was particularly seen in the field of science and health. Al-Alawneh (2014) ^[2] explored what Yarmouk University students think of career opportunities. He found marked differences by gender, education, and subject. After attending a life skills program, scientific students among 317 subjects from 15 universities showed more empathy, communication and stress management than humanities students.

Various authors, including Collet *et al.* (2015) ^[4] who used EFA, have investigated what employers expect in the knowledge economy sectors. Ten broader skill clusters have skill issues of cognitive and interpersonal were identified. As a result, this curriculum was formulated from a developmental perspective, unlike the 'normal' informative curriculums devised to prepare students for challenging real workplaces. In 2015, Evering conducted a standard employability survey to find weaknesses in critical thinking and teamwork among the 400 students in the southern region of Nigeria. According to the research, universities must offer internships and experiences on a voluntary basis. According to Tisdell (2016) ^[16] from a STST study and by means case-study of 500 first-year science, mathematics, medical science students, T-shape student configuration in STEM education. Results of the study showed that confidence in collaboration, and applied learning and professional advancement was better in scientific students. However, Gowsalaya and Kumar's (2017) ^[6] study involving 500 arts and science students from Namakkal District throws a spanner into the works. Their study found that there is no significant difference in the employability skills of the arts and science students, after all.

Rintari (2017) ^[11] studied 420 graduates and their supervisors using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The research demonstrated a strong positive association between employability, learning engagement, and fit of the employed role with skills of a participant. The collaboration between academe (often referred to as an educational institution) and industry (an organizational body) in Curriculum review is important in developing employability practices.

According to Kumar (2020)'s ^[9] study that was conducted amongst Tamil Nadu students, the contrary view was that students pursuing the arts seemed to have better employability skills than the science students. The method of teaching and the environment affect much.

Bhatt, Smita, A Study of the Barriers to Accessing Jobs in the Indian Higher Education System and Advocacy for Systematic Changes Based on Secondary Data Analysis (December 26, 2021) Some recommendations were to strengthen academic leadership, foster entrepreneurship and consolidate policy level support. In his study (2021), Sekhri examined the impact of missing employability skills on students' employability in Punjab. The study used a cross-section survey conducted on 1058 students of public and private colleges and 174 faculty members. It was reported that missing internships and business linkages considerably affect students' employability.

Aier and Joseph in their 2022 research brought forth new perspectives for analyzing the repercussions of National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020. Critique of the prevailing educational practices such as rigid organization of the curriculum, outmoded pedagogy and lack of vocational orientation was expressed and proponents demanded far-reaching changes in common sense for improvement in the integration of skills and construction of sustainable professional pathways.

In these studies, we will see a general concept, that employability is more than just knowledge. Skills encompass emotional, cognitive, technical and professional attributes. The findings of previous studies differed in terms of the level of development of employability skills over time by the graduates (Jackson, 2013; Al-Alawneh, 2014; Tisdell, 2016; Kumar, 2020) ^[7, 2, 16, 9], whereas contradictory results were found in (Weligamage, 2009; Ekpoh, 2015; Gowsalaya & Kumar, 2017; Rintari, 2017; Sekhri, 2021) ^[17, 5, 6, 11, 12].

Nonetheless, there is near universal agreement that colleges and universities have to re-examine the way in which teaching is carried out so as to be more aligned to the changing needs of the world of work.

3. Methods and Materials

Research Methodology

This research used a descriptive survey method to assess the current state of employability skills of university graduate students. The analysis techniques were chosen because they allow for a series of data collection and analysis activities concerning a particular group. It recognizes the patterns, tools and stated skills it possesses without altering the real world.

Population and Sampling Technique

All graduate university students from the state of Odisha were the target population of the study. However, limitations on feasibility do not enable researchers to cover the entire area and, therefore, a study has been conducted on a sample of 100 students from Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur. To maintain equal representation from two academic backgrounds, the sample was evenly divided of 50 students each from Science Stream and Arts Stream. A stratified random sample technique to ensure that there is heterogeneity and avoid sampling bias in the two samples.

Instrumentation

The Employability Assessment Tool was used to gather the data. It was developed and normed by Larry Dershem, and the scale was created in 2016 to assess the following six areas of employability.

1. An optimistic Self-Scheme.
2. Control yourself.
3. Interpersonal skills.
4. Communication skills
5. Solution Finding Skills
6. Skills Pertaining to Job Search

The tool consists of 24 statements in total, with four statements per employability factor. The scale has strong psychometric properties as is revealed by its high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 indicating good construct reliability. You score anywhere from 4 to 20 in each subscale. Still, total employability score may range from 24 to 120. The higher score represents better manifestation of employability-related skills in the students.

Data Collection Procedure

Before using the device, officials of the university granted permission. The study's purpose was clearly explained to participants along with instructions as to how they would respond to the inventory's items. (25 words) They were also informed that the responses would be kept secret, and participation was not mandatory. Once the surveys were filled out and submitted, the researcher gave a heartfelt thanks to those who took the time to help her.

Statistical Techniques Employed

To attain the goals of this research, descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the analyses. To showcase the common patterns of employability skills of the sample, descriptive statistics, i.e. simple percentages were used. An independent t-test was conducted to check if there are any significant differences in the employability skills of students of Science and Arts streams.

1. Discussion and Results

Table 1: A Survey of College Graduates on Their Perceived Employability Skills

Employability skills →	Self-Concept (%)	Self-Control (%)	Social Skills (%)	Communication Skills (%)	Problem Solving Skill (%)	Job Search Skill (%)
Arts (50)	20	16	24	18	10	12
Science (50)	14	18	10	16	26	16
Total (100)	17	17	17	17	18	13

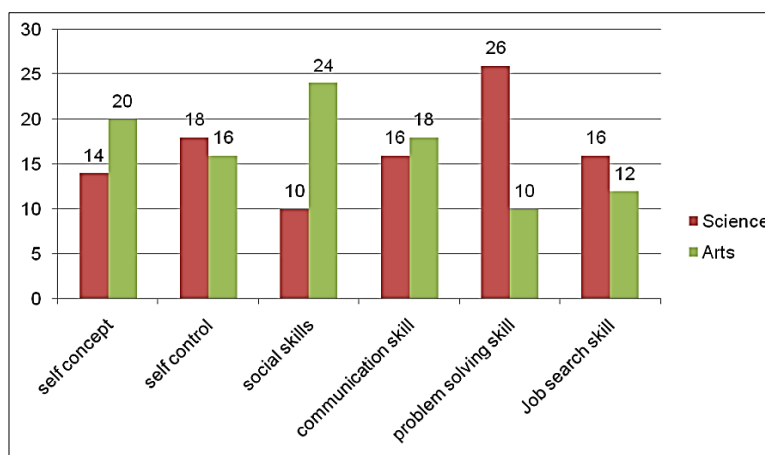


Fig 1: Bar chart showing differences in employability skills of art and science students

According to Table 1 and figure1, the outcome of the study is empirical evidence of the employability skills of science and arts stream under graduates of Gangadhar Meher University. Findings of this study show that, participants possessed the key sub-skills of employability such as self-concept, self-control, social skill, communication skill, problem-solving skill, and job-search strategies at different extents.

The next percentages of students are strong in these key areas: self-concept 17%, problem-solving 16%, and job-searching 13%; social skills 18% and communication 13%. The statistics indicate that the employability among students over there is a fairly balanced proficiency, which can be boosted.

A comparison of employability skills between the two disciplines shows significant differences in them. According to the findings, arts students had a 20% higher self-concept rating than science students who reported 14% self-concept. On the contrary, among students pursuing Science, 18% as compared to 16% of Arts, self-control of the individual was relatively good indicating, they were emotionally controlled and behaviourally self-disciplined. Social abilities were the greatest point of contrast, according to the researchers. While 24% of students studying arts were highly capable, only 20% of science students could say the same art

curriculums have been more focused on discussion classes, group assignments, and communication based classes. A fairly equal number of Arts (18%) as well as Science (16%) students were proficient in their Communication Skills, implying while the ability is there to work with in both groups they are likely to need a lot of help in this area.

Science students were more likely than Arts to exhibit problem solving ability (26% v/s 10%). A possible reason for this finding may be due to the science-oriented program of study encourages uses of critical thinking and reasoning based on evidence. Additionally, compared to Arts students (12%), Science students reported significantly greater job search skills (16%), probably due to greater participation in career service programs and/or a more technical orientation towards professional development.

To sum up, these findings highlight the importance of creating employment-boosting activities that are specific to each runoff. Science students have a gift for the subject. They also do better in practicals. In contrast, Arts students are strong in interpersonal areas. They also excel in introspective areas. Recognizing these strengths and weaknesses can aid teachers and curriculum developers in planning targeted teaching interventions that engender integrated profiles of employability which can enable graduates to respond to different labour market needs.

Table 2: The variation in the employability of graduates with arts and science degrees and its importance.

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	SED	df	't' value
Employability skills	Science	50	78.4	9.6	2.09	98	2.77 (significant at 0.01 level)
	Arts	50	72.6	11.2			

As per Table 2, GM University Science graduate students possessing employability skills received an average score of 9.6 while Arts graduate students received an average score of 11.2. Using 98 degree of freedom, the calculated "t" value of 2.78 is greater than the critical value of 1.98 at 0.05 level of significance and also the critical value of 2.63 at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, the null is false, and

we go with the alternative hypothesis. Affirmative. t statistic is above critical so reject null hypothesis. The null hypothesis is false as can be seen. The findings indicate that there is a significant difference between the employability skills of arts and science graduate students. Graduates in science are more employable/marketable than those in arts or humanities, according to popular perception.

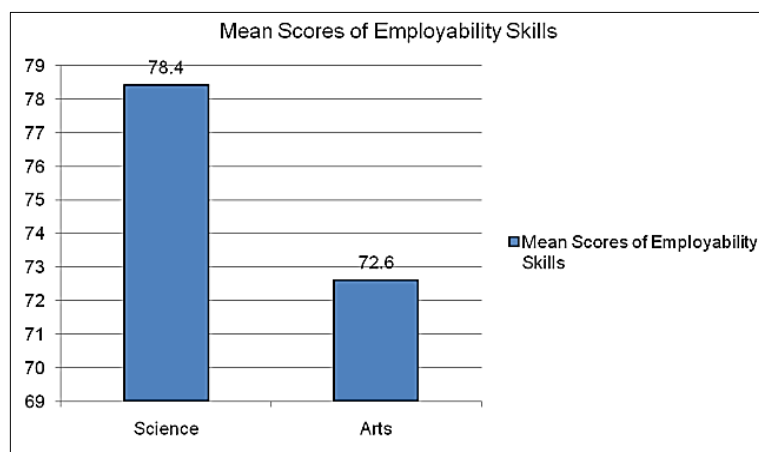


Fig 2: Shows a bar plot of average employability score of arts and science graduates. According to figure 2, Science students have a greater mean employability score than that of Arts students. The visual analysis indicates a notable disparity in employability skills among Science and Arts graduates between the two academic environments, with Science graduates exhibiting superior skills.

Discussion

The current study's results reveal a worrying situation in employability readiness of college students. The findings revealed a significant gap between what industries expect and academic performance, as only 18.7% students are considered employable. There is a big gap between what employers want and what graduates have to offer. This means that today's university graduates are increasingly ill-equipped to meet the demands of the fiercely competitive labour market.

Science and Arts students have a huge gap when it comes to subjects. It appears that people with scientific training are more likely to be employability oriented particularly regarding analytical thinking, problem solving, and job-search tactics. This can be attributed to the generally structured and applicative-based nature of science teaching, which contributes towards the development of the art of thinking and know-how of technology.

Students studying arts paid greater attention to interpersonal and social aspects, such as being communicative, empathetic and working as a team. While these skills may not yield immediate economic returns, companies that emphasize group work and emotional intelligence are increasingly considering them as assets. Results of the study are in line with Findings of Jackson (2013) [7], Al-Alawneh (2014) and Tisdell (2016) [2, 16] which cited greater work readiness of students of Science and Technology courses compared the students of non-technical streams. In contrast, the results contradict Kumar (2020) [9] who found better employability of Arts graduates.

2. Conclusion

Major Findings

Based on the tables and figures of the preceding chapter, as well as data analysis and interpretation, the investigator has obtained the following study results.

1. Science graduates realize the subjective value of employability aspect more than their arts counterpart, a survey has revealed.
2. The self-image of artistic graduates surpasses that of scientific graduates.
3. Science graduate students have higher self-control than the art graduates.
4. Students who graduated from arts colleges were more socially smarter than their science counterpart.
5. The arts graduate students possess superior communication skills than the science graduate students. Thus, the hypothesis is accepted.

6. Science graduate students are relatively better than arts graduates as far as problem-solving skills are concerned.
7. Science graduates exhibited superior job search skills as compared to Arts graduates.

The results revealed that Science graduates' employability rate is higher than Arts graduates' employability rate, which implies that both the academic groups are varying considerably in their overall puppetry skills.

Suggestions and Implications

1. Integrating employability skills into the curriculum is a crucial step: As a result, we see that higher education institutions need to embed employability skills as part of the curriculum in all the courses. This package will help better understand the concepts and equip with the necessary skills. According to many experts, the most respected and desired thing from the professionals today is a good work, especially in the area of Admirable.

2. Periodic Skill Gap Analysis: It is very important for institutions to know the strengths and weaknesses of the students and tracking employability skills helps to do so. Thus, information collected from such assessments could be useful in guiding the development of targeted interventions that aim at reducing the gap between educational provisions and industrial needs.

3. Boosting Hands-On Experience and Industry Connections: Academic programs can consist of internships, industry visits, field projects, and hands-on learning modules. Experiencing real-world work trains students to learn practical skills which improves their readiness for work and bonds their tertiary education with employability.

4. Regularly Updating the Curriculum to Reflect Industry Changes: Curricula should be updated timely according to the real job requirements with the help of professionals. Regularly updating and revising academic programs is essential to ensure the programs' continuous relevance. It is necessary to examine recent advances in technology, market modifications and emergence of new career opportunities for future readiness and employability.

5. Workshops for Skill Development and Capacity Building: Higher education institutions ought to conduct

Dropout content seminars/workshops on a continuous basis which could be like drafting curriculum vitae, interview skills/digital literacy, leadership, personal branding, etc. The aim of these classes is for all round personality development and give opportunities to students to show a new level of professionalism and confidence.

6. Strengthening collaborations between industry and academia is a key goal: Colleges should work with industry so that students have a skill set valuable in the market when they graduate. Collaborations, such as those involving course creation, expert guest lectures, shared projects, and workplace training delivery, can enhance both future job prospects and employability skills.

Conclusions: The present study is aimed to determine the employability skills of undergraduate Science and Arts students of Gangadhar Meher University and it is concluded that there is a wider gap in the order of scaling of skills of between these two subjects. Science students were found to possess better critical thinking and practical skills such as self-regulation and job search strategies. There was no significant difference in General Communication of Art and Science students even though in the sub-domains of Interpersonal Communication and Social Interaction, Art students scored significantly higher than Science students. Overall, these findings suggest that an adjustment towards more skills training in higher education may be warranted. Science students ought to have more opportunities that will help them develop their interpersonal and communication skills. They should also train art candidates to think critically and find solutions to problems. One way is through a cross-disciplinary integrated curriculum. The design of the syllabus must fuse the academic knowledge with the skills and the practices followed in industries.

The growing range of jobs available to graduates is accompanied by a growing competition, thus it is necessary that graduates develop a wide range of skills, many of which are beyond the core disciplinary knowledge. Thus, developing all these aspects thoroughly would improve the employability outcome of the individuals. It will also help build a talented, flexible, and vision-driven workforce in the economy.

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Appendices

Employability Assessment Tool

Sl.no	Statements	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA
1	I feel valued and appreciated by others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I feel good about my future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I anticipate my own needs ahead of time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I can adapt to changes by learning new skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I am able to complete assignments in time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	I feel proud when I produce high-quality work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	I go to work even when I feel like staying at home.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8	I follow workplace or school dress codes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I can understand and work with people from different backgrounds.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I accept people who are different from me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	I value the input and contributions of others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	I take responsibility for what I do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	I know how to express myself in proper ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	I know how to articulate my own ideas clearly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	I read so I can comprehend and use new information.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	I listen actively to understand and learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	I collect, analyse and organise information to find the best solution to a problem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	I seek many sources of information to solve a problem in school or at work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	I learn from my past successes and mistakes to make future decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	I can adapt to changing circumstances.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21	I have the knowledge and skills needed to interview for jobs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	I know how to prepare a resume.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	I know how to complete a job application.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	I have the skills and experience valued by employers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐