



Mauritius Research Council
INNOVATION FOR TECHNOLOGY

**TOWARDS GRADUATE
WORK READINESS
IN
MAURITIUS:
A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER
APPROACH**

Final Report

June 2017

Mauritius Research Council

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This report is based on work supported by the Mauritius Research Council under award number MRC/RSS-1713. Any opinions, findings, recommendations and conclusions expressed herein are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the Council.

Towards Graduate Work Readiness in Mauritius: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach

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MAURITIUS RESEARCH COUNCIL
SMALL SCALE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION GRANT SCHEME

Final Report
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the Mauritius Research Council for awarding us a Small Scale Research and Innovation grant to support our research project.

Our sincere gratitude goes to the Graduate Work Readiness team at Curtin University, Australia, for extending the scope of their research to include Mauritius, and for giving us the opportunity to contribute to their wider project.

A special mention to our research assistants for their invaluable help at various stages of the project. This project would not have been possible without the participation of the various stakeholders whose support was instrumental in this research.

We would also like to thank Curtin Mauritius for the unwavering support and encouragement.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

The 21st century workforce presents numerous challenges. Generation Y employees are less focussed on building their career within an organisation and more keen on taking ownership of their work progression in their quest for job gratification and work life balance (Connell and Burgess 2006). A shift from being “employed” to being “employable” is seen as careers centre less on employers and more on employees taking full responsibility of their job experience (Forrier, Verbruggen, and De Cuyper 2015). Accordingly, employability or work-readiness is essential to sustain a competitive edge on current job markets (Acikgoz, Sumer, and Sumer 2016). On the other hand, employers, globally, are increasingly concerned about the dearth of “employable” representatives amongst job candidates due to a skills mismatch (Hays 2016). As the skills gap between potential employee capability and employer requirements widens, employers grapple with finding the right job candidates and organisations suffer to sustain growth and competitiveness (Galagan 2010). Countries such the United Kingdom and the United States blame the growing divergence between employer needs and job market capabilities for their increasing unemployment rates (Hays 2016). A similar problem is reflected in the Asia Pacific region where countries such as India, China and Vietnam deplore an increasing skills gap, particularly in occupations relating to trading, sales, engineering, accountancy, information technology and management (Cameron et al. 2015). Verma et al. (2016) report only thirteen percent of Asian graduates as work-ready. Such absence of a skilled workforce not only impedes business profits, employee morale and market share, but it also slows innovation and inhibits economic growth (OECD 2011; Galagan 2010).

Mauritius faces a similar situation. Its unemployment rate has stagnated at around 7% since 2001, and from the 39,600 unemployed Mauritians reported in the fourth quarter of 2017, representing 23% of graduates (Statistics Mauritius 2017b). Industry is struggling to find the right candidates for employment and both the quality and significance of qualifications produced by local institutions are questioned (World Bank 2015). In addition, an employability survey conducted by Business Magazine and Verde Frontier (2016) reports a significant lack of soft skills among new Mauritian graduates. The study also highlights the inability for graduates to communicate effectively and work efficiently in teams as being the most salient graduate employability issues. The survey results further expose a dearth of valuable work experiences among graduates.

This research therefore aims at exploring graduate employability challenges in Mauritius before proposing recommendations to better prepare Mauritian graduates for the needs of the labour market. The project is part of a wider research initiative from Curtin University, Australia, to study graduate work-readiness in the Asia Pacific region as well as Mauritius.

1.2 Research objectives

The main objectives of this research are therefore to:

1. Evaluate the extent and nature of work-readiness/employability challenges facing graduates, private sector employers, government, and Higher Education institutions (academic and vocational) within Mauritius
2. Identify the current strategies and approaches that (a) government, (b) educational institutions, and (c) other key stakeholders have developed to address these challenges

3. Determine how effective these strategies have been to date from multiple stakeholder lenses.
4. Recommend an effective strategy to address these challenges for key stakeholders in Mauritius

1.3 Research significance

While, on one hand, graduates experience difficulties in securing a job, on the other, companies in Mauritius struggle to fill their vacancies with the right candidates. Graduates therefore have no other choice but to acquire the best blend of employability skills prior to joining the job market. From the Mauritian government, to employers, to Higher Education institutions, multiple stakeholders have implemented solutions in an attempt to remedy the situation. Nonetheless, the problem appears to persist, and there remains a need for research to better understand graduate work-readiness challenges in Mauritius across different stakeholder perspectives, and propose new strategies to meet them.

1.4 Report outline and structure

This report is organised in five chapters outlined below:

- Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the context of the study and outlines the report structure.
- Chapter 2 discusses graduate work readiness (at large and from a Mauritian perspective) based on a comprehensive review of literature, before introducing the framework underlying this study.

- Chapter 3 outlines the research design by describing the process for conducting interviews, the survey used to further collect data, and the techniques for data analysis adopted in this research.
- Chapter 4 presents and discusses the research findings from different stakeholder perspectives.
- Chapter 5 proposes a Graduate Work Readiness Integrated Stakeholder Framework to be supported by a National Work Integrated Learning to address the issues identified before it concludes the report.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2011) defines work-readiness as being the right blend of skills required to remain sustainable on the labour market. When extended to graduates, such expectations include both a strong mastery of discipline knowledge and understanding of transferrable skills that are critical for success in the workplace (Nilsson 2010). Graduates can no longer afford to slowly ease their way into a job as they are required to be productive from their very first day (Ferns and Lilly 2016). Nonetheless, such employable graduates are hard to find and industry deplores the mismatch between graduate capabilities and the requirements of the labour market (Ortiz, Region-Sebest, and MacDermott 2016). The situation is no different in Mauritius where graduate employability is one of the island's main areas of concern.

2.2 Graduate Work Readiness or Employability

Work-readiness is one of the prime solutions to resolving the skills gap between aspiring employees and the workplace (Acikgoz, Sumer, and Sumer 2016; Ferns and Lilly 2016; OECD 2011; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden 2006). Employability represents the extent to which an employee is valued by either current or future employers (Acikgoz, Sumer, and Sumer 2016). For graduates, this implies being productive at work right from day one (Ferns, Smith, and Russell 2014). Jackson (2016, 926) extends the definition of Graduate Work Readiness (GWR) to include the concept of pre-professional identity which is defined as “an understanding of and connection with the skills, qualities, conduct, culture and ideology of a student's intended profession”. Such identity is crucial for graduates to be perceived worthy for employment. Employers seek to recruit

graduates who not only have a good mastery of their discipline, but also demonstrate a set of quintessential soft skills, such as good communication and the ability to work in teams, for efficient and effective work (Finch et al. 2013). Nevertheless, employable graduates are rare and businesses struggle to recruit required talents (Hays 2016).

2.3 Graduate Work Readiness in Mauritius

Aligning with global trends, Mauritius also suffers from the issue of skills mismatch. Since its independence in 1968, the island has grown into an African role model with a fast progression from a low income to a middle-income economy. From being primarily dependent on a mono-crop (sugar) industry, the island has moved to a diversified and more knowledge-driven economy dominated by its services sector, more specifically finance, tourism and a growing ICT industry. Like other Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Mauritius is constrained by limited resources, small economies of scale and a strong dependency on international trade. Investment in human capital including quality education for sustainable employment prospects is therefore key for the development of the island (UNDESA Division for Sustainable Development 2014).

Yet, employment in Mauritius warrants improvement. With unemployment rates stagnating at an average of 7% since 2001, a total of 41, 800 people were reported as unemployed in 2017 out of which 24.9% are less than 25 years old and 23% are graduates. (Statistics Mauritius 2017). While around 7000 Mauritian graduates leave university every year (Business Magazine 2016), 3000 were reported as unemployed in the 2015-2016 Mauritian Budget (Mauritius Budget Speech 2015-2016) showing that graduates are not sufficiently absorbed by the island's labour market (Kisto 2015). Despite the availability of jobs, employers struggle to find Mauritian candidates with the required skills (Ministry of Labour Industrial Relations and Employment 2014) and many find

themselves with no other option but to recruit from overseas at salaries which are often at least twice as high as those of local employees (Kisto 2015). With 54% of responding enterprises reporting an inability to recruit suitable candidates locally (World Bank 2015), it is not surprising that 38,808 foreign employees were registered in Mauritius in the same year (Ministry of Labour Industrial Relations and Employment 2014). Sectors such as ICT and finance report a severe shortage of labour with the required qualifications (World Bank 2015), and Mauritian employers condemn a strong absence of essential soft skills amongst many young graduates, particularly in areas of communication and team work, as well as a lack of authentic and valuable work experiences (Business Magazine 2016).

The Mauritian education system is accused of being too academic with insufficient focus on both industry-relevant discipline knowledge and soft skills (Ministry of Labour Industrial Relations and Employment 2014). Mauritius currently ranks 52nd in the Higher Education and Training pillar of the Global Competitiveness Report 2017-2018 compared to countries such as Malaysia (4^{5th}) and Chile (26th) (World Economic Forum 2017). This could be explained by insufficient university enrolment rates which dropped from 48,970 in 2015 to 48,089 in 2016 (Statistics Mauritius 2016; Statistics Mauritius 2017a), as well as poor collaborations between higher educational institutions and industry (World Bank 2015). Universities imperatively need to focus more on producing the specialised skills required for the knowledge economy as aspired by the Mauritian government. Additionally, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector remains minimal as, notwithstanding a spread of approximately 110 prevocational schools in March 2017 with 9,047 students enrolled (Statistics Mauritius 2017a). Full-time enrolment rates in TVET institutions are also less than 3% of total secondary enrolment as compared to 8% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 17% in East Asian countries, and employers find it difficult to gauge the level of training provided

(World Bank 2015). Lack of communication between TVET institutions and industry results in a misalignment between curriculum and the needs of the market, qualified trainers are rare, equipment used are often obsolete and TVET graduates are not sufficiently tracked for valuable feedback (World Bank 2015). Both the quality and relevance of skills provided by higher education institutions are therefore questioned, and graduates often find themselves underemployed as the qualification earned is not required on the Mauritian job market (Kisto 2015).

Such dearth in the Mauritian workforce is reflected in the island's global economic performance. Despite maintaining its position as the most competitive economy of Sub-Saharan Africa, Mauritius has only moved up by one place from 46th to 45th on the global competitiveness scale in 2017-2018 (World Economic Forum 2017). Strong improvements in its higher education and workforce are recommended to catalyse the island's drive for a knowledge-driven economy, particularly since its inadequately educated workforce ranks third on the list of reasons hindering business in Mauritius (World Economic Forum 2017).

2.4 Stakeholders

Solutions for a highly skilled, sustainable workforce to promote organisational effectiveness, innovation and growth require the involvement of a number of stakeholders (Galagan 2010). Governments, employers, educational institutions and graduates, both individually and collaboratively, need to take responsibility for bridging the skills gap. Governments should take ownership of the design, funding, regulation and evaluation of strategies and policies for the development of an appropriately skilled workforce. Educational institutions should implement the strategies while graduates should develop the required skills and employers should attract and

retain skilled employees (Cameron et al. 2015). Government, higher education institutions and employer initiatives to develop graduate work-readiness are discussed in more details next.

2.4.1 Government

Government interventions are instrumental in bridging the skills gap. For example, to boost ICT employment and growth in Mauritius, the World Bank (2015) recommends that both the Ministry of ICT and Ministry of Education create incentives for the Mauritian ICT industry to work more closely with higher educational institutions for industry tailored curriculums, provide specialised courses in collaboration with experts, and offer closely monitored internship programmes. The government also has the responsibility to fight brain drain by actively communicating high market demands in specialised areas such as ICT and engineering as well as offering support for new businesses in such fields (World Bank 2015).

Several projects have been implemented by the Mauritian government to improve graduate employability. These include the Human Resource Development Council's (HRDC) Graduate Training for Employment Scheme which offers graduates the possibility of further enrolling on industry certifications, professional or training courses designed by Higher Education institutions in collaboration with industry (HRDC 2015). Another example is the Dual Training Programme (DTP) developed by the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training (MLIRET), HRDC and industry to combine classroom training with work experience to enhance work-readiness. The MLIRET also worked jointly with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MFED) and the private sector to implement the Youth Employment Programme (YEP) for the development of critical employability skills. Other governmental initiatives include the lower-six programme which provides work placement opportunities right from secondary

school level and the Career-3 project comprising of a series of career talks to secondary school students to help them develop a career mindset right from a young age (HRDC 2015).

2.4.2 Higher Education Institutions

Universities have the added responsibility of producing graduates who are able to consistently live up to the employability expectations of industry through both soft skills (Smith, Ferns, and Russell 2014), and domain-specific expertise acquired by connecting theoretical concepts with workplace practice and beliefs (Billett 2009). The path to career-ready graduates lies in maximum exposure to experiential learning opportunities or Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programmes, which complement academic knowledge with authentic industry experiences (Jackson 2015). Consequently, universities need to develop ongoing partnerships with organisations from the industry and the community for the collaborative delivery of real and relevant learning experiences (Ferns and Lilly 2016).

In Mauritius, Higher education institutions (HEIs) have been increasingly committed to producing employable graduates, and contributing to the country's economic growth and social well-being. They have adopted various initiatives to assist in bridging the gap between graduate skills and industry/labour market expectations ranging from counselling support and employability training to work placement and industry-based projects.

Serving as a bridge between university life and the world of work, work placements have been embedded within several university programmes. For example, work placements are mandatory for full-time students studying at the University of Technology (UTM) to provide them with pre-professional work experience as per their chosen field of study. These placements last for 15 weeks during which the students must report and work under the supervision of their work placement

supervisors for at least 4 days per week. They must also meet with their work placement assessor from the university during the placement to discuss about the work conducted and any other related issues. Upon completion of their placement, they are expected to submit a portfolio which summarises their work experience and also reveals their progress and ability in acquiring and applying knowledge and skills as required by the workplace. The portfolio is assessed and graded by both the work placement assessor and supervisor (UTM 2016). A similar program, namely, the Work Based Learning has been set up by the University of Mauritius (UOM) across all of its programmes to assist its students in developing their employability skills and inculcate a work ethics culture through a six weeks' industry training (UOM 2017).

Alongside work placements, some institutions also provide their students with other Work Integrated Learning opportunities both within and outside the curriculum to build their work-readiness. For example, UTM offers the Employability Skills Development (ESD) programme which trains undergraduates for interviews, career possibilities and fundamental employability skills such as communication, teamwork, self-management and ethical practice (UTM 2016). Middlesex University (Mauritius Branch Campus) provides coaching, weekly employability drop-in sessions and organises skills workshops on effective CV and cover letter writing, preparing for job interviews, leadership skills, networking, and presentation skills to increase the employability skills of their students. Several other events, including Graduate Prospect Day and employer presentations, create awareness of vacancies, graduate training schemes, internships or volunteering opportunities (Middlesex University Mauritius 2017). Similarly, at Curtin Mauritius, there is a dedicated career centre where the students are provided with online internship and job application support resources and one-to-one counselling sessions from an experienced career counselling team. The institution has set up a dedicated portal where students can proceed with

their applications and employers can advertise their job, placement or internship opportunities. The institution also organises yearly career fairs to link students with industry.

Joint-collaborations between HEIs and students associations have also been noted for organising employability and career events. Such a yearly initiative is conducted by the University of Mauritius and the student union for the undergraduate students to participate in a 3-day workshop to improve the graduate employability by eliminating the gap between employers and graduates expectations and assist in their integration into the workplace. The students benefit from the insight of private sector experts as well as staff of the university on labour market expectations, professional CV writing, business writing skills, discipline and ethics at work as well as self-marketing. Through the workshops they can also develop their employability skills such as communication, presentation, leadership, team working, problem solving and critical thinking, among others (UOM 2016).

Curtin Mauritius partners with major employers from the industry to allow its students to further improve their skills and knowledge, including ‘soft’ employability skills and specific technical skills and competencies. These include opportunities to work on authentic industry projects to reinforce their discipline knowledge and boost their work-readiness. Curtin Mauritius students also volunteer on numerous community-based projects to couple employability enhancement with service to the Mauritian society for a more inclusive mindset.

2.4.3 Employers

Increasingly, Mauritian employers have started to realise their strong responsibility in forging work-ready graduates. Consequently, many provide their assistance in the design of industry-pertinent curricula on GTES, DTP and YEP programmes (HRDC 2015; MLIRET 2015). They

also contribute to graduate re-skilling programmes such as the HRDC-led Graduate Innovative Learning (AGILE) programme which provides employability training to unemployed graduates to assist them in securing middle-management jobs in the hotel industry (HRDC 2016). Several employers also have their own graduate training programmes. For the example the Barclays Ready to Work programme assists final year university students in developing job readiness skills through an online course, keeps them current through innovative workshops led by field experts, and helps them better understand professional expectations through a 1:1 pairing with an industry mentor. Similarly, KPMG and PwC have graduate training programmes. Another example is that of Adecco which developed the Way to Work initiative for providing students with internships, career training and an opportunity to participate in the Adecco CEO for a Month competition. Such employability-focussed competitions also include the CFA Financial Analysis competition, the HSBC Case Study competition, and Mauritius Film Development Corporation (MFDC) led short film competitions, which, apart from enabling students to put their classroom knowledge to practice, also give them the opportunity to network with industry and develop employability skills such as communication and team work.

2.5 Graduate Work Readiness attributes

Several career-readiness skills have been identified in literature. For example, in their study of factors affecting the employability of graduates, Smith, Ferns and Russel (2014) identify six domains for employability or graduate work readiness measurement. These include (1) collaboration and teamwork including effective interpersonal, communication and listening skills, (2) informed decision making based on valid and comprehensive information and its analysis, (3) commencement/work readiness or the ability to effectively contribute to the organisation from the

first day of employment, (4) lifelong learning reflecting a desire to work on areas of improvement and a commitment to learning new skills, (5) professional practice and standards aligning with workplace expectations including ethics, values, the ability to take responsibility for one's actions and to strive for the achievement of professional goals, and (6) integration of theory and practice or the ability to recognise the value of and apply theoretical knowledge in the workplace.

Many of these skills are consistent with Nilsson's (2010) study of graduate employability. He claims that, whilst formal competence and knowledge are important to get hired, soft skills such as leadership and interpersonal skills as well as transferable skills such as the ability to find and synthesise information, think critically and adapt to as well as drive change through lifelong learning take precedence in order to remain employed (Nilsson 2010). Mitchell, Skinner and White (2010) also identify soft skills including general ethics, communication (general, oral and written), time management, diversity, leadership and problem-solving skills as essential attributes to successfully integrate the twenty-first century workforce. Several of them are corroborated by Finch et al. (2013) who identify listening, interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills as well as problem-solving skills (such as critical and creative thinking skills) as prime employer decision-making criteria when hiring graduates. Whilst a lot of emphasis is placed on transferable or generic work-readiness skills, Nilsson (2010) posits that employability is also relative to the profession and its context. Such "domain-specific occupational knowledge" is an interconnection of theoretical concepts with practice and beliefs moulded from workplace experiences (Billett 2009, 832–33).

2.6 Research framework

Based on Graduate Work-Readiness attributes identified from literature (Figure 1) and aligning with the overall research project led by Curtin University across the Asia Pacific region, this study is based on the resource-based view of Strategic Management Theory where Graduate Work-Readiness is viewed as the complex integration and application of four specific resources (integrated dynamic capabilities) categorised as personal, meta-skill, intellectual and job-specific. The skills encompassed by each capability is detailed in Table 1.

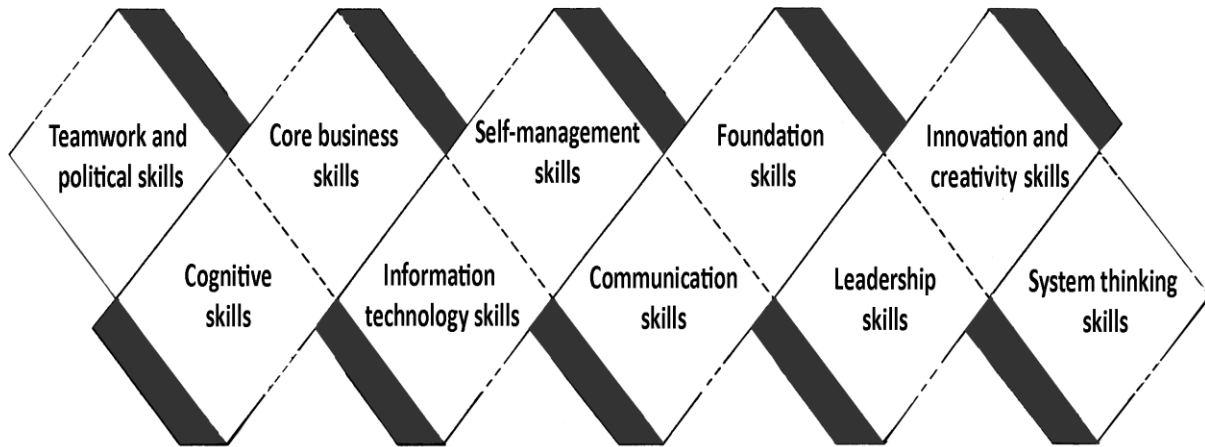


Figure 1: Graduate Work-Readiness Skills Framework

Integrated dynamic capabilities	Competencies
Personality resources	Self-management, Innovation and creativity, Leadership abilities
Intellectual resources	Cognitive capabilities, Foundation skills
Meta-skill resources	Teamwork and political skills, General communication, IT skills, System thinking skills
Job-specific resources	Core business skills

Table 1: Summary of Graduate Work-Readiness dynamic capabilities

The remaining sections of this report shall discuss the research design, analyse the findings and propose recommendations to better address the problem of graduate employability in Mauritius.

Chapter 3: Research design

3.1 Overview

This section of the report will detail the methods used to address the research following research objectives:

1. Evaluate the extent and nature of work-readiness/employability challenges facing graduates, private sector employers, government, Higher Education institutions (academic and vocational) within Mauritius
2. Identify the current strategies and approaches developed by (a) government, (b) educational institutions, and (c) other key stakeholders developed to address these challenges
3. Determine how effective these strategies have been to date from multiple stakeholder lenses.
4. Recommend an effective strategy to address these challenges for key stakeholders in Mauritius

The chapter is structured around the approach relied for data gathering and the analysis techniques used.

3.2 Mixed methods approach

From the above objectives, there is a need to both gather in-depth insights as well as to obtain the perception of the various stakeholders concerned to understand the nature of Graduate Work Readiness challenges, their consequences and strategies developed to address these issues on the island. As such, a mixed methods approach has been used as outlined below.

3.2.1 Governmental and Regulatory bodies

For this category of stakeholders, interviews were conducted to obtain a rich insight on the challenges, consequences and strategies being adopted to address the issue of Graduate Work Readiness. Representatives from the following bodies have been interviewed during the month of February to July 2017.

- The Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
- The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training
- The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
- The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)
- The Mauritius Qualification Authority (MQA)
- The Human Resource Development Council (HRDC)

All interviews were face to face with a semi-structured approach and covered themes such as the nature of GWR challenges experienced by the interviewees, their consequences, and strategies developed to address them. The interview questions are presented in Appendix A. The interview data was then analysed using thematic content analysis.

3.2.2 Employers and educational intuitions

For this category of stakeholders, a survey was conducted (see Appendix B for survey questions). For employers, the top 100 companies by profit, were selected and the survey was emailed to their Human Resources department. The survey was released in July 2017 and kept open until August 2017, with regular follow-up calls, by the research assistants, to maximise response rate. A total of 37 employers responded to the survey, which aligns with Cycyota and Harrison (2006) as well

as Baruch and Holtom (2008) predictions of response for this category of stakeholder and consequently considered as being adequate and acceptable for analysis.

Additionally, the first eleven largest public and private educational institutions (from TEC figures) were surveyed (see Appendix C for the survey questions). Only six of these institutions responded positively to the survey. They are:

1. BSP School of Accountancy
2. London College of Accountancy
3. The Charles Telfair Institute
4. Mauritius Institute of Education
5. Mahatma Gandhi Institute
6. Open University of Mauritius

As with the employee category, regular calls were made by the research assistants, to maximise response rate.

3.2.3 Undergraduate Students

A survey was administered to third year students (see Appendix D for the questions) during the months of October and November 2017 from three higher education institutions namely:

1. The University of Mauritius
2. The University of Technology – Mauritius
3. The Charles Telfair Institute

A total of 254 undergraduate students responded to the survey. For all surveys conducted, a questionnaire was designed, pre-tested and refined prior to administration. Research assistants

compiled the data from the different sources before analysis. Findings from the stakeholders explored are discussed next.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

4.1 Introduction

The following section outlines the findings of the survey carried out with employers and students. A summary of the interview findings is presented in Appendix E.

4.2 Employer Survey Findings

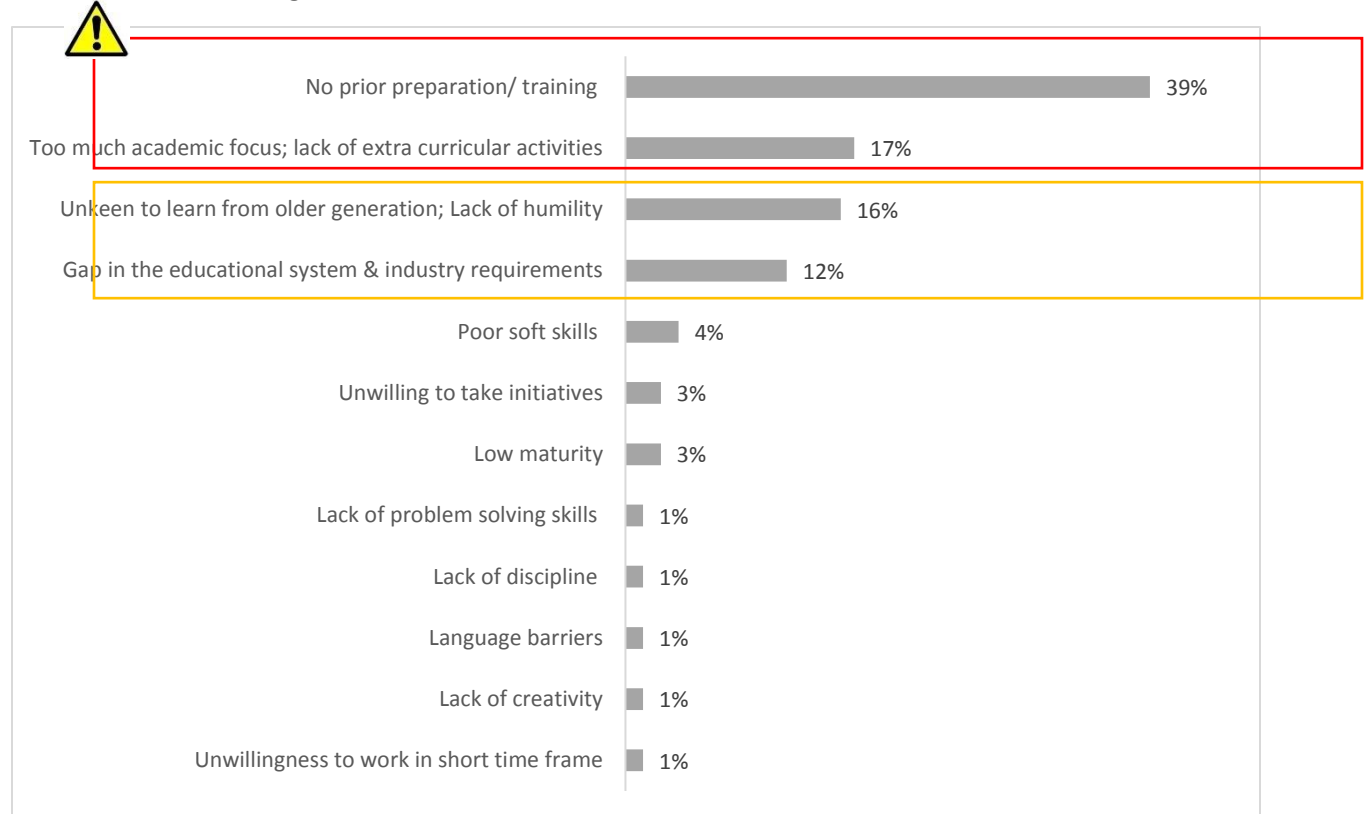
Q2 - Challenges Associated With Work-Readiness of Fresh Graduates in Mauritius



Base: 41 respondents from corporates & educational institutions in Mauritius

The results show that one quarter of the respondents perceived that the highest challenge was the lack of experience of fresh graduates [25%] followed by their lack of communications & soft skills [17%]. There is also a strong perception that fresh graduates fail to adapt smoothly in work environment [12%] and they are often impatient to climb the career ladder without taking the time to acquire precious on-the-job experience [11%].

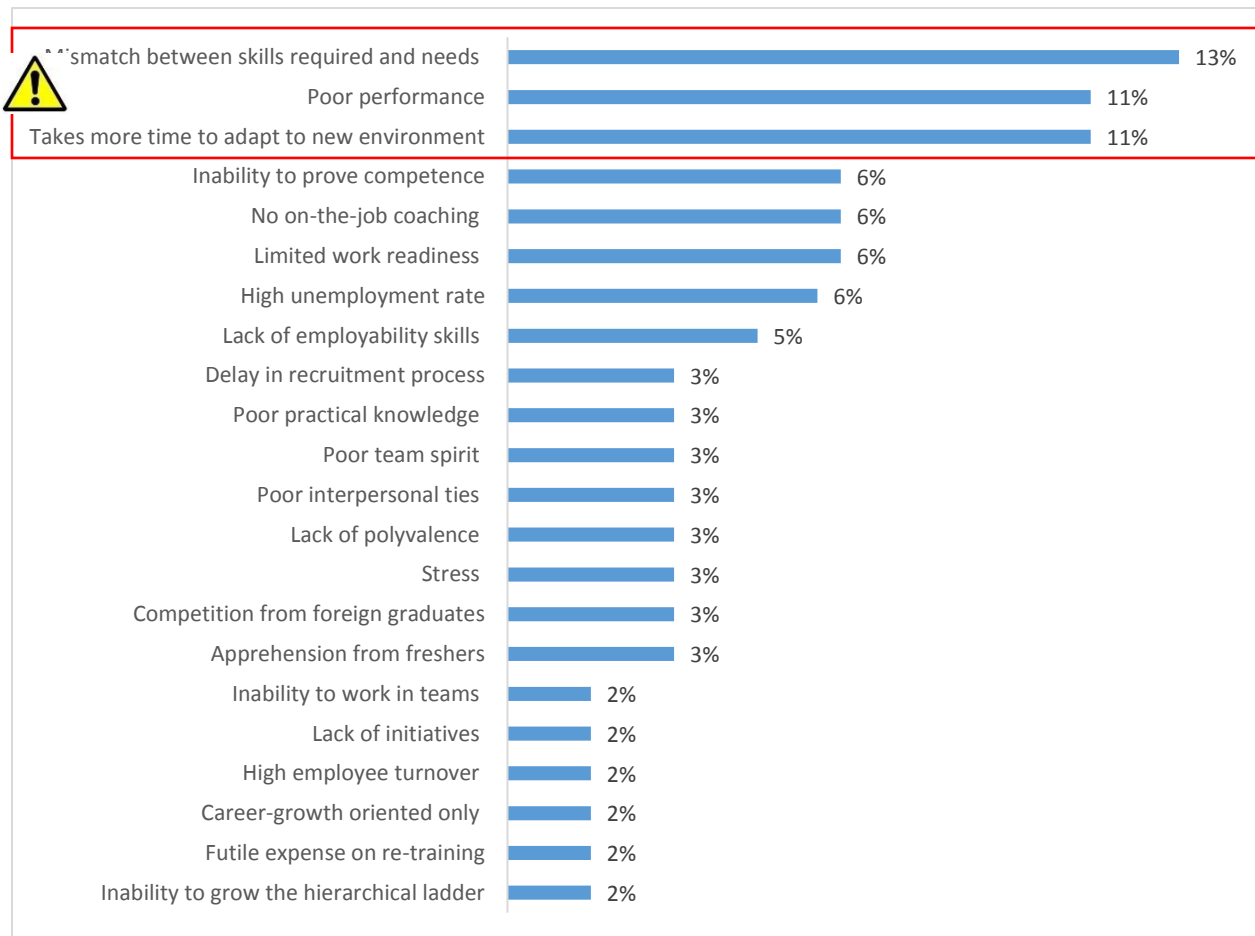
Q3 – Causes of Challenges Associated With Work-Readiness of Fresh Graduates in Mauritius



Base: 41 respondents from corporates & educational institutions in Mauritius

The results show that the most significant cause behind this is a lack of proper training of graduates when they enter the labour market [39%]. This is followed by the perception that there is not enough focus on extra-curricular activities that assist in self-development – current educational curriculum are stated to be too academic [17%]. On top of that, there seem to be an attitude problem as young graduates find it difficult to accept job realities and refuse to learn from seniors [16%]. It was also widely agreed that there is a gap between industry requirements and the academic system in place [12%].

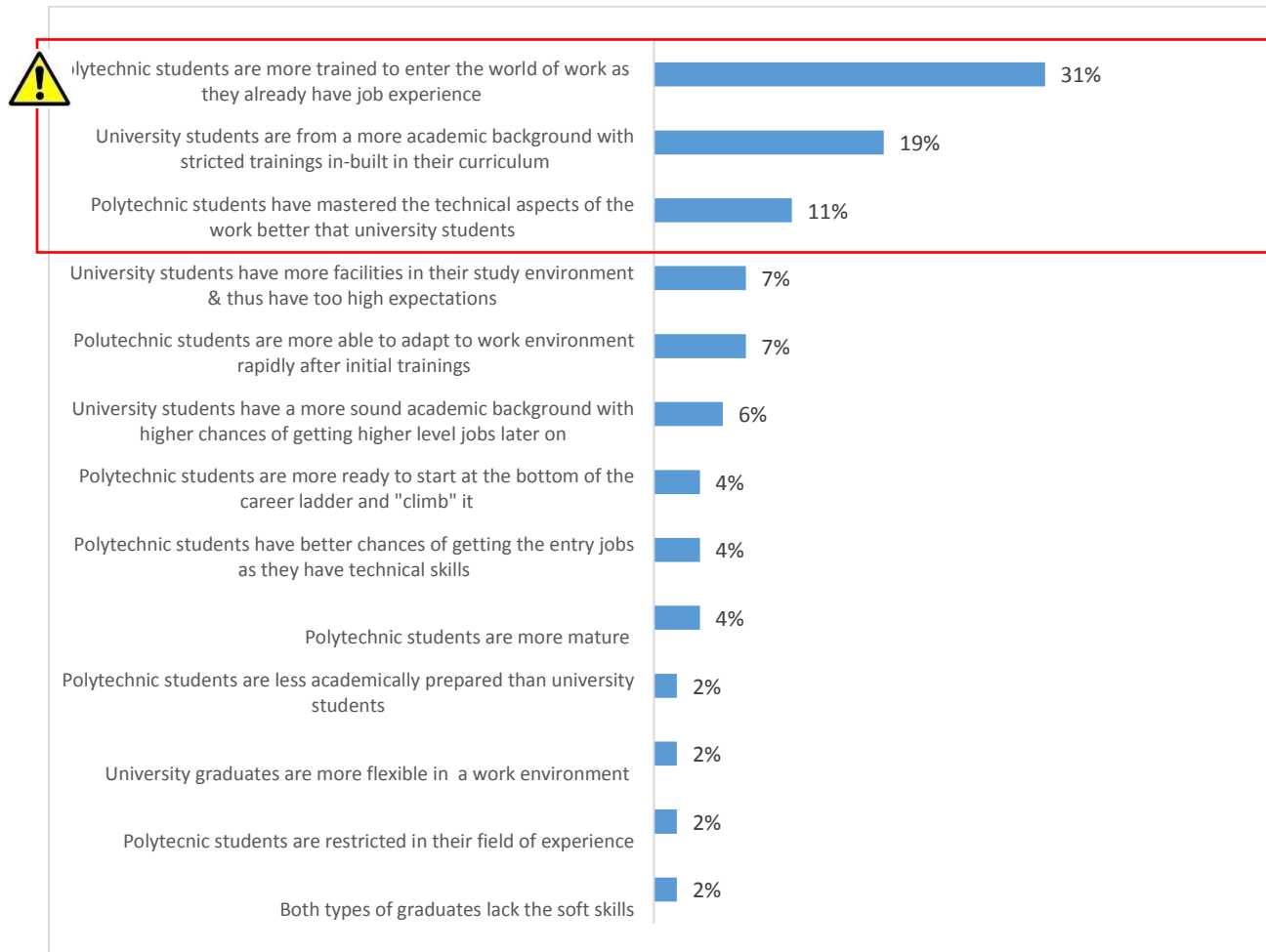
Q4 – Consequences of Challenges Associated With Work-Readiness of Fresh Graduates in Mauritius



Base: 41 respondents from corporates & educational institutions in Mauritius

The above results show that the mismatch between skills required and skills needed is the biggest consequence of the challenges faced by employers [13%]. It is followed by Poor performance [11%] and longer period to adapt to the work environment [11%] which are equally perceived being the second biggest consequences of GWR challenges.

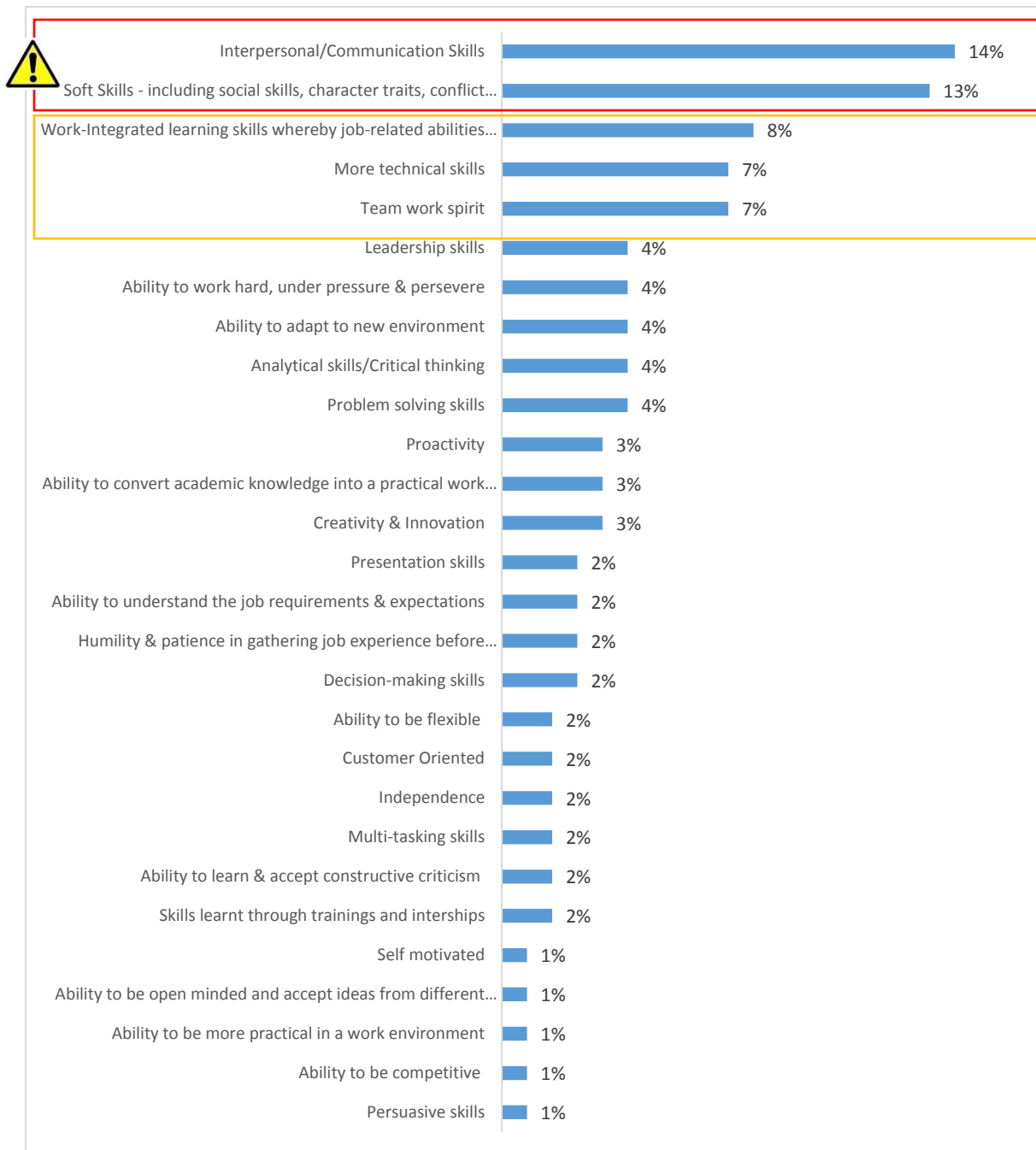
Q5 – Differences between Vocational Education (Polytechnic) and Higher Education (University) Graduates In Terms Of Work-Readiness



Base: 41 respondents from corporates & educational institutions in Mauritius

As shown in the above results, there is a perception that Vocational students are better trained to enter the job market as opposed to the Higher Education students [31%] and also mastered the technical aspects of the work better than Higher Education students [11%]. There is also a perception that Higher Education students are from a more academic background [19%]. The results also uncover some perceptions that Vocational students are ready to start at the bottom of the career ladder [4%] but that Higher Education students can expect higher chances of getting higher level jobs later in their career [6%].

Q6 – Skills a fresh Higher Education (University) graduate require to be work-ready in Mauritius

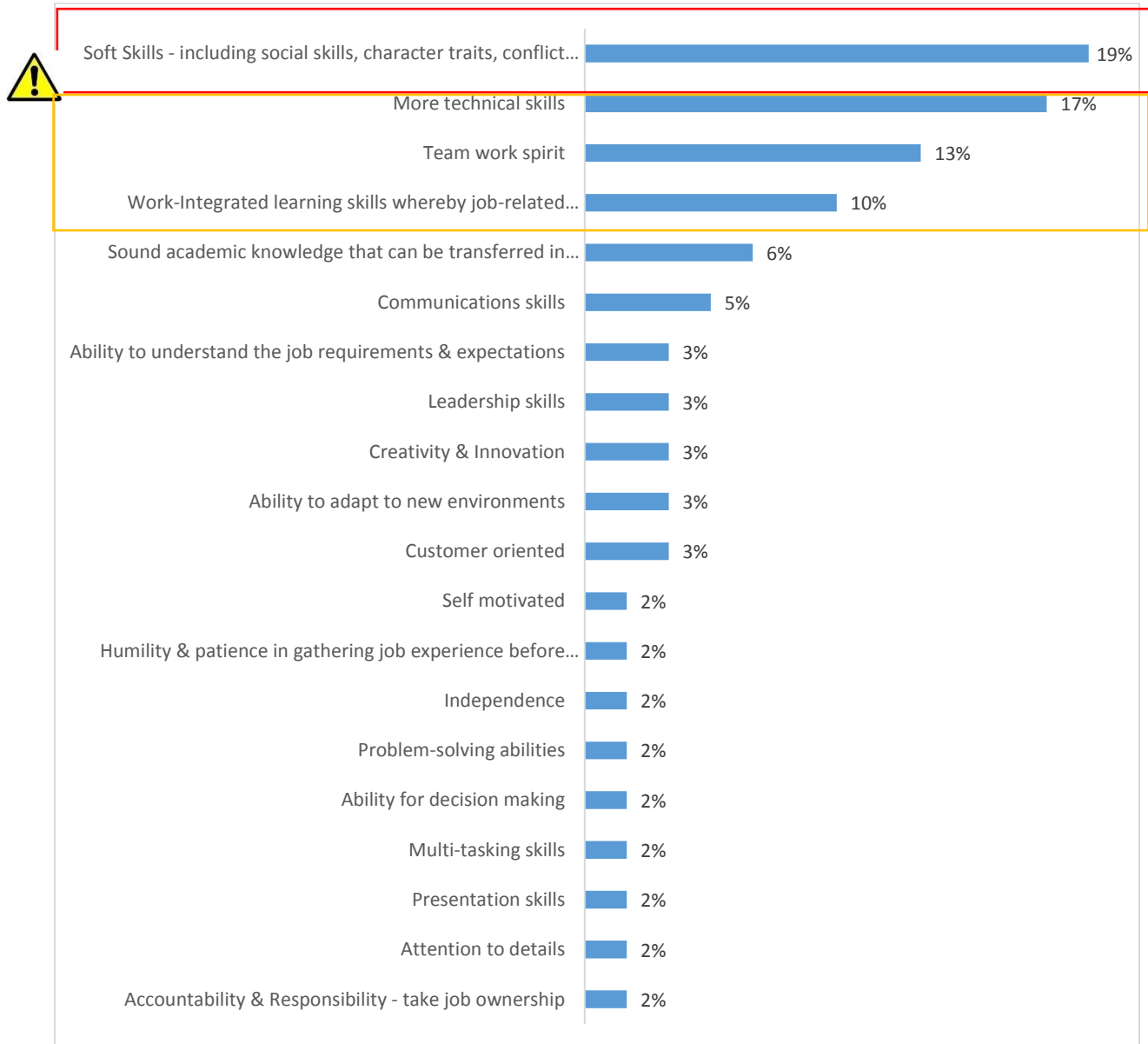


Base: 41 respondents from corporates & educational institutions in Mauritius

The results show that Higher Education graduates require interpersonal and communication skills [14%] and soft skills including social skills, character traits and conflict management skills [13%] more than technical skills [7%]. The results further demonstrate that Higher Education graduates are expected to

have the right attitudes by being flexible [2%], being able to learn and accept constructive feedback [2%] and have humility and patience in gathering job experience [2%] amongst others.

Q7 – Skills a Vocational Education (polytechnic) graduate require to be work-ready in Mauritius



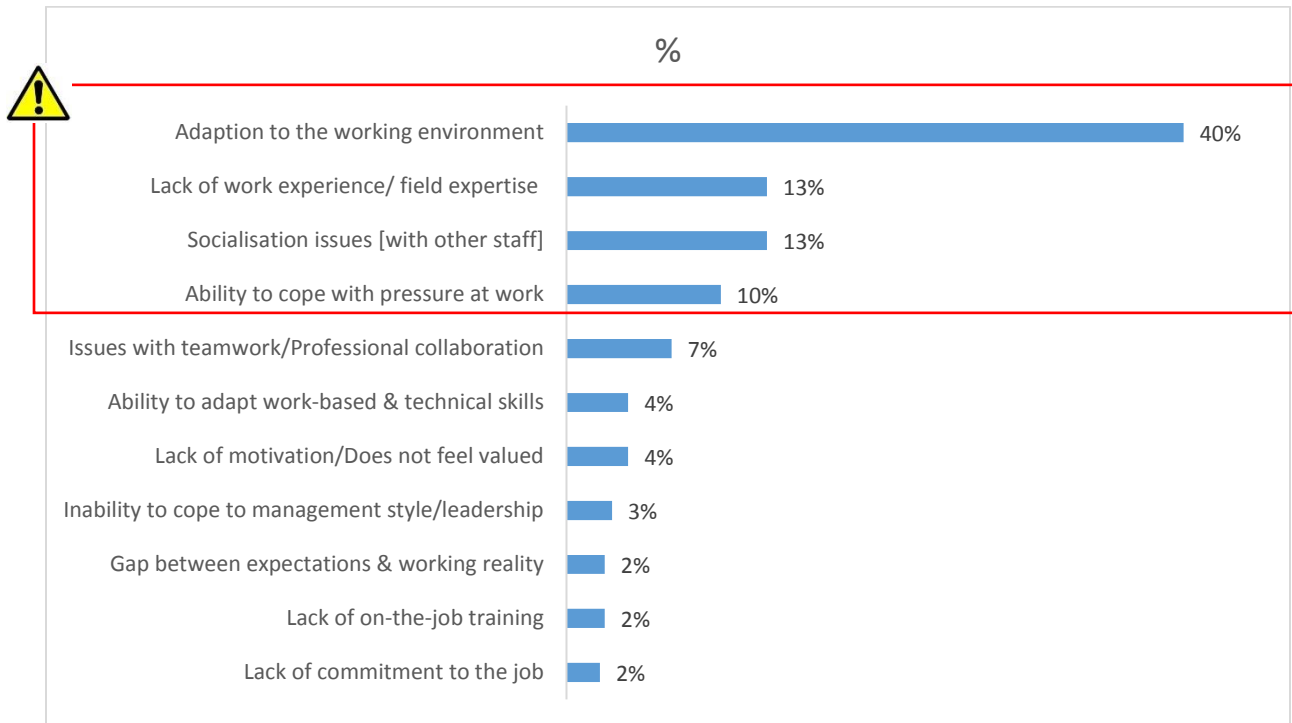
Base: 41 respondents from corporates & educational institutions in Mauritius

The results show that compared to their Higher Education counterparts, Vocational Education graduates are expected to have the soft skills, including social skills, character traits and conflict management [19%] followed by technical skills [17%], team work spirit [13%] and communication skills [5%]. They are,

however, expected as Higher Education graduates to possess problem solving abilities [2%], customer-oriented attitude [3%] and creativity and innovation [3%].

4.3 Student Survey Findings

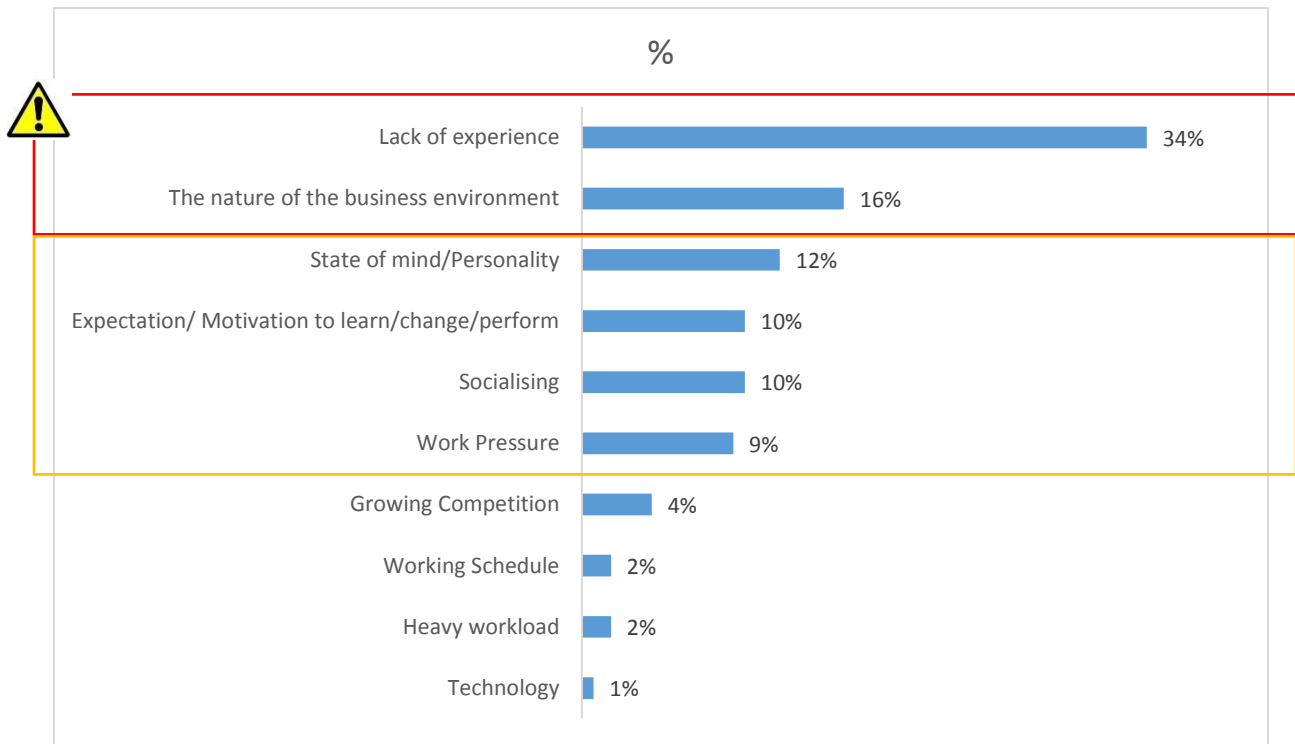
Q1 - Challenges, Causes and Consequences of Graduate Work-Readiness



Base: 238 graduates across three national universities in Mauritius

The results show that the main challenge faced by fresh graduates is their inability to adapt to the corporate culture in organisations [40%], followed by their lack of experience of field [13%], having socialization issues [13%] and the difficulty to work under pressure [10%]. Students also perceived their inability to cope with the different management styles and leadership as a challenge to their work readiness.

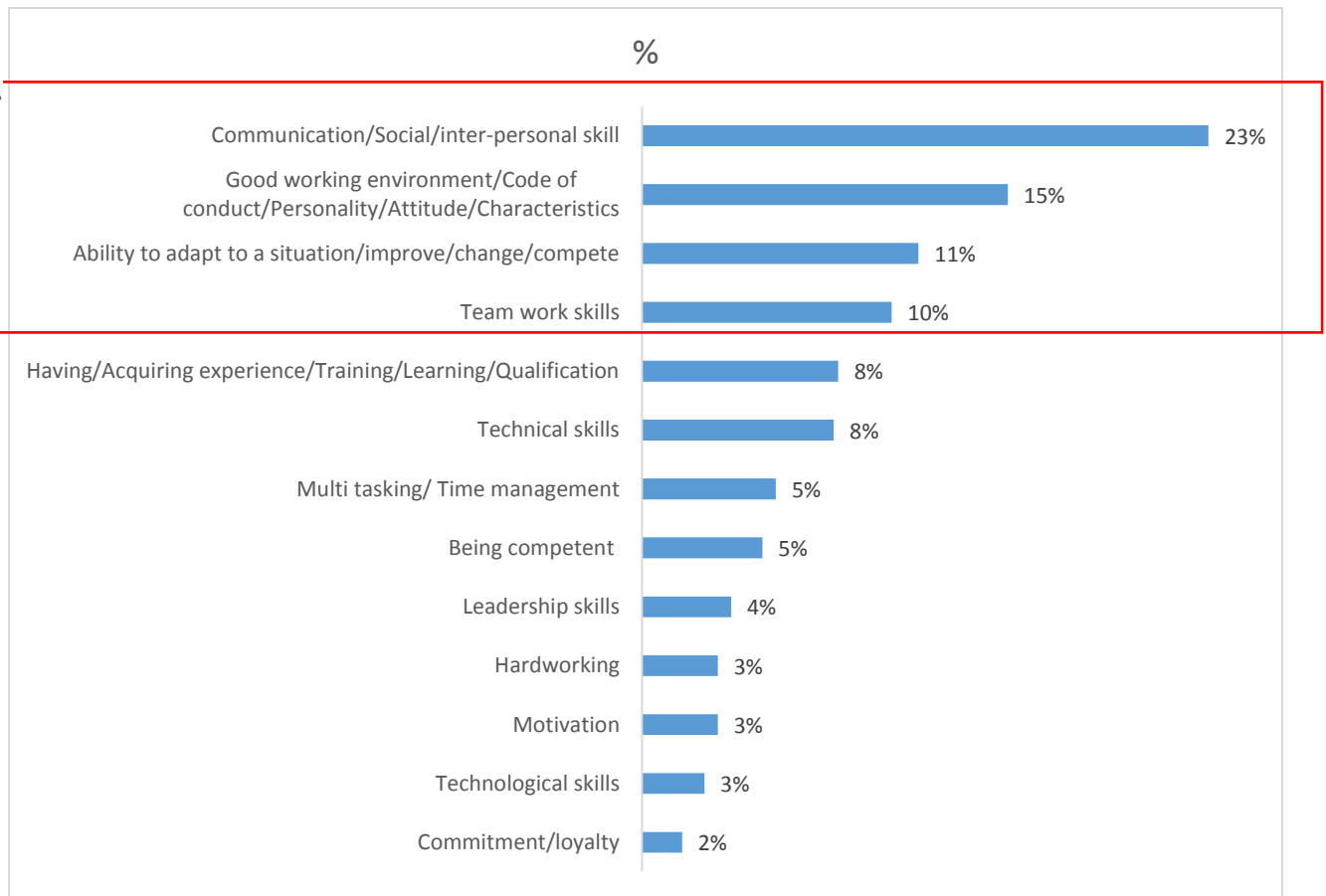
Q2 - Causes of challenges for Graduate Work-Readiness



Base: 238 graduates across three national universities in Mauritius

The findings suggest that students perceive their lack of experience [34%] and the nature of the business environment [16%] as the main causes of the challenges of their work readiness. The students also perceive work pressure [9%] and expectation [10%] as causes of challenges.

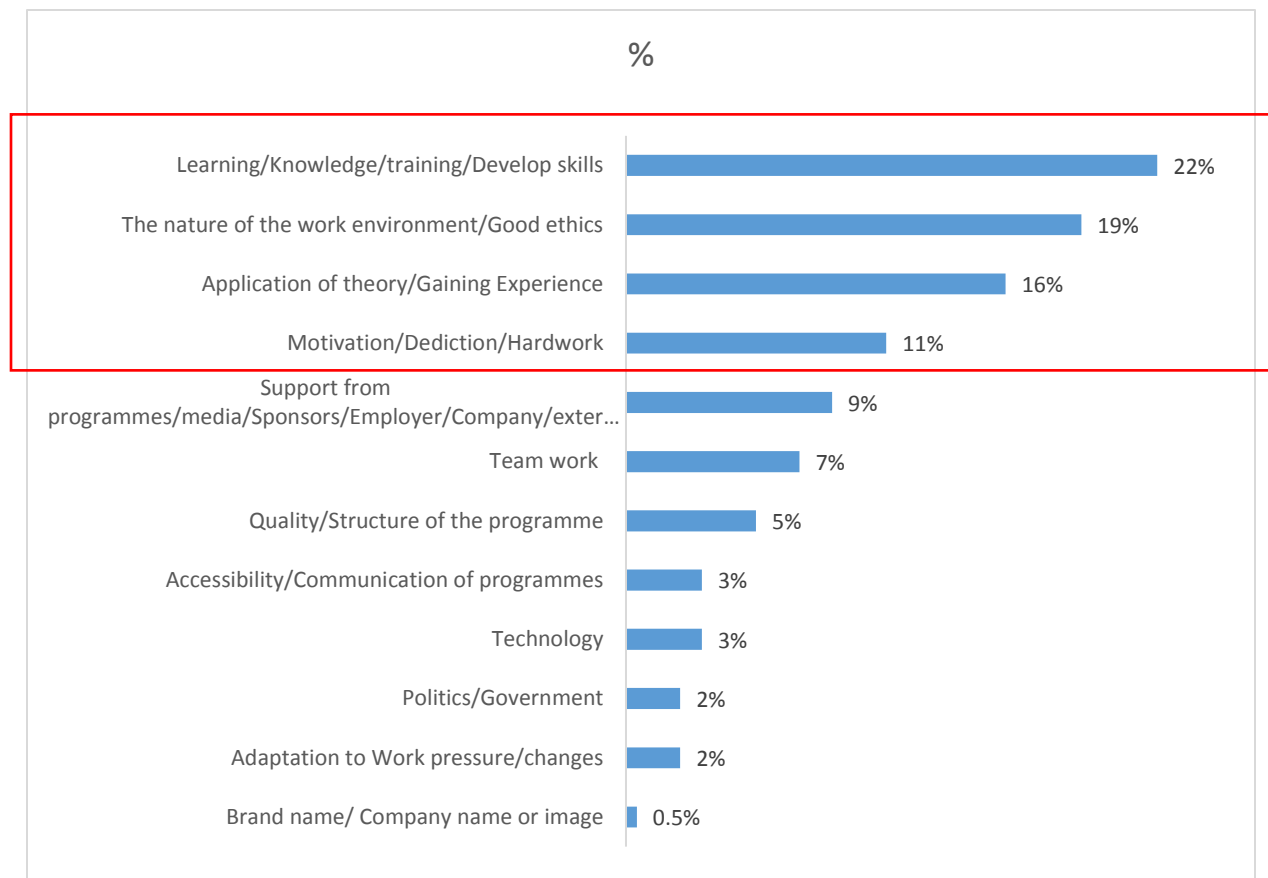
Q3 – Perception of skills that are important to be productive in the workplace



Base: 238 graduates across three national universities in Mauritius

Among the skills that are important to be productive in the workplace, students perceive communication [23%] as being the most important skills. Ability to adapt to a situation [11%] is also perceived as being important followed by team work skills [10%].

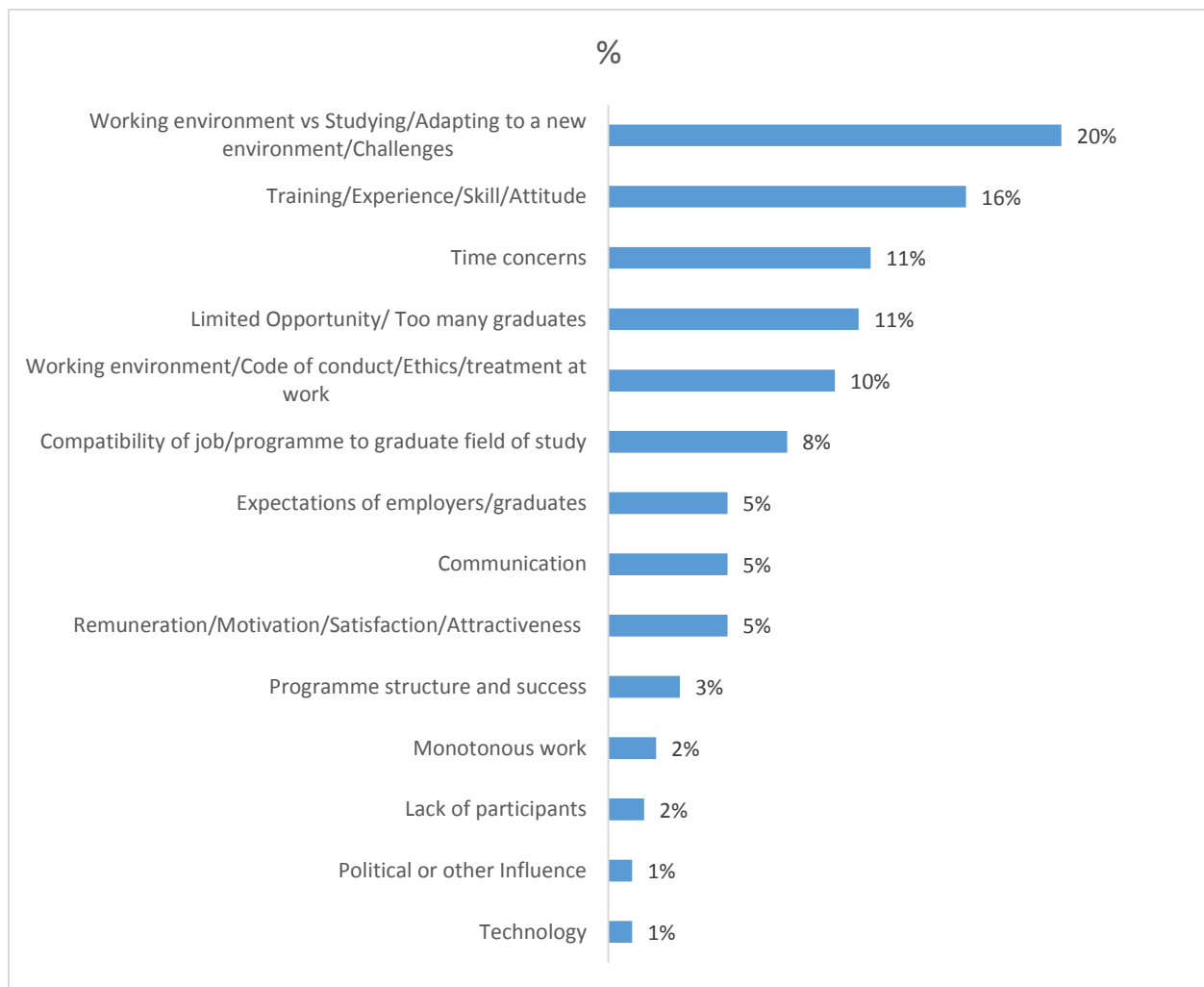
Q8 – Factors which have contributed to success of work-readiness programmes



Base: 238 graduates across three national universities in Mauritius

The results show that students perceive the training programmes as being the right way to develop both their technical and soft skills [22%]. They further perceive the application of the theory and gaining work experience [16%] as being among the reasons for the success of work-readiness programmes.

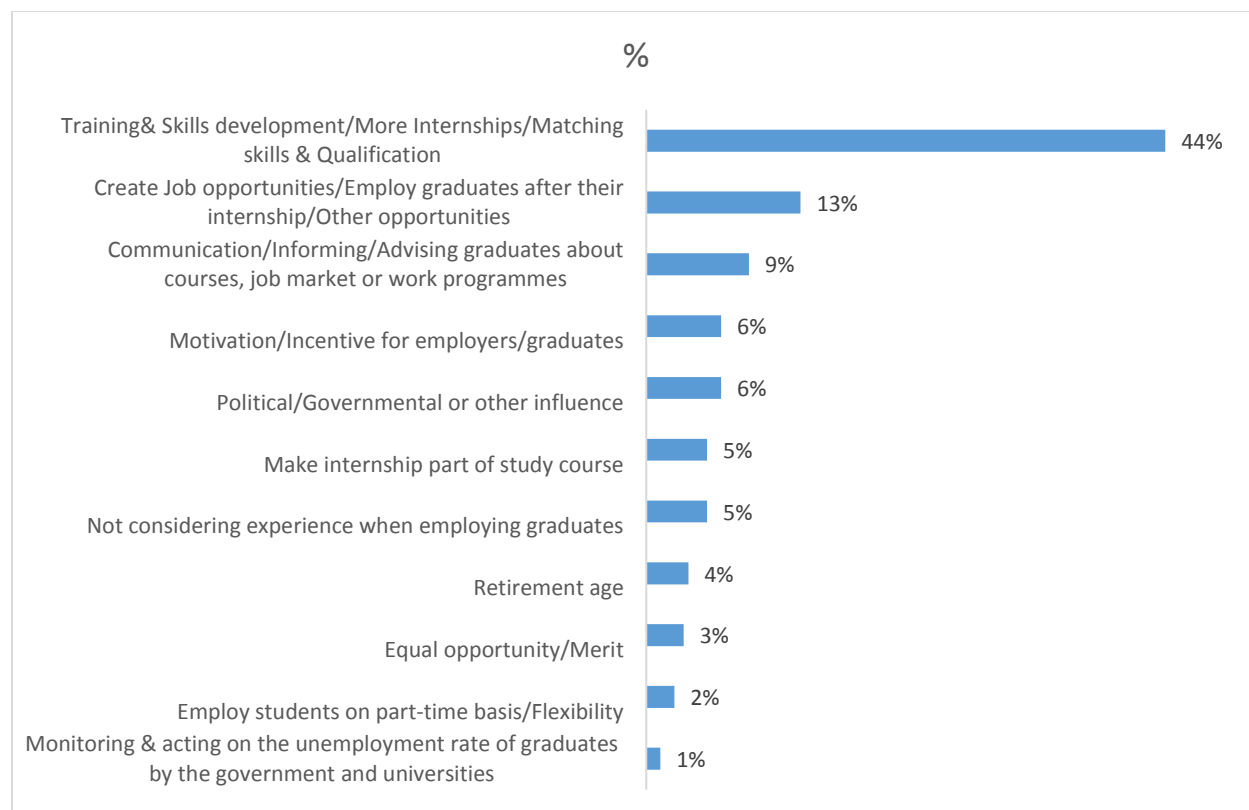
Q9 – Any challenges faced with any work-readiness programmes implemented



Base: 238 graduates across three national universities in Mauritius

When queried on the challenges faced with any work-readiness programmes, students perceive the work environment or adapting to the work environment as a major impediment [20%]. They further perceive that the programmes are too short and are not always compatible with their field of study [8%]. They also note that lack of remuneration is also an issue.

Q10 – Recommendations for improving work readiness in Mauritius



Base: 238 graduates across three national universities in Mauritius

The survey findings suggest that there is a high demand for such programmes aimed at making students work ready [44%]. Students feel that there is a need to create job opportunities or to employ graduate after their internship [13%]. The students also feel that there is not enough advertisement on the different offerings and these should be communicated more [13%].

Chapter 5: Recommendations and conclusion

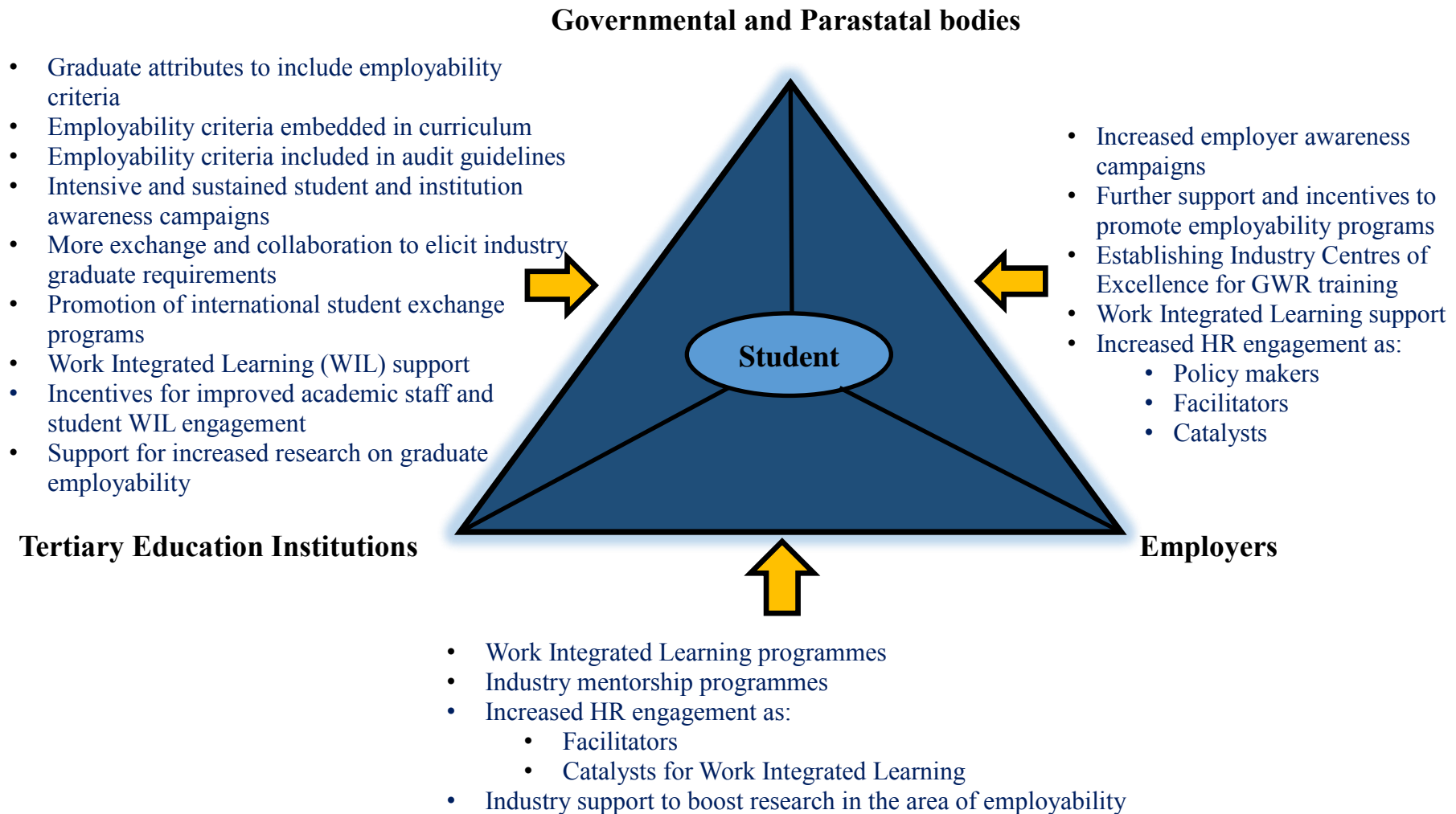
5.1 Overview

Both Higher and Vocational Education sectors are expected to produce rounded graduates, who not only master their respective disciplines, but are also productive, flexible and resilient members of an increasingly competitive and dynamic work environment. Such work-ready graduates can only result from strong stakeholder links to further reinforce and build on existing employability strategies. This study recommends a Graduate Work Readiness Integrated Stakeholder Framework (GWRISF) supported by a National Work Integrated Learning Committee to strengthen communication and extend partnership opportunities among employers, educational institutions and government. The next sections of this chapter will discuss the recommendations proposed in more details.

5.2 Recommendations

Figure 2 summarises the different strategies recommended in the GWRISF. The framework proposes actions for a deeper relationship among three main stakeholders (government and relevant parastatal bodies, tertiary level educational institutions and employers) to catalyse the development of work-ready graduates. Suggestions to boost each relationship link are explained in the sub-sections which follow.

Figure 2 : The Graduate Work Readiness Integrated Stakeholder Framework



5.2.1 Relationship between government/parastatal bodies and tertiary education institutions

As a key starting point to the development of work-ready graduates, both Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education (VE) establishments could embed work-readiness within their course modules and extra-curricular projects. Currently, many universities including the UOM and UTM offer separate credit-based units to train students in the acquisition of essential employability skills such as communication and teamwork. In addition to those standalone modules, we propose that tertiary education institutions from both the HE and VE sectors focus on employability as a prime graduate attribute and include it as a learning outcome for each module or unit. As reinforcement, regulatory bodies for both HE and VE institutions could highlight graduate work-readiness as an essential criterion in all course accreditation and audit guidelines. Tertiary education providers could then be evaluated based on their ability to embed industry-relevant skills both within the curriculum and outside, along with opportunities for students to reflect on their employability and build their pre-professional identity.

Our study also revealed insufficient student and graduate awareness of the various governmental initiatives aimed at enhancing their work-readiness. In that respect, we would recommend more intensive and sustained awareness campaigns for both students and academic staff. While currently programmes are advertised on various media, more face-to-face dialogues with students at different institutions could be coordinated by the Ministry of Education and the HRDC for heightened understanding and responsiveness.

Tertiary education institutions would also benefit from working more closely with the government to elicit industry graduate requirements and generic trends so as to better review their course offerings and develop evidence-based programmes catering for employer expectations. Already

the HRDC is doing a lot of work in that respect through research on skills needed in various economic sectors such as ICT and the Manufacturing sector. Further collaborative work in this direction is encouraged. It is also believed that the government could support institutions in the promotion of international student exchange programmes as an opportunity for experiential learning, improved command of language and enriched cultural understanding. Such skills are not only beneficial for the local job market, but they also provide the graduate with a strong edge on the global front or when collaborating with an international team.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is an umbrella term which encompasses a variety of purposefully- designed activities used to integrate theory and workplace practice within a student's experience. These could range from the traditional student internship to guest lectures from discipline experts, real-life based assessments, industry projects and even community service. Governmental support for university WIL practice could include WIL awareness, capacity building, and even templates for WIL activity evaluation and recording. Further WIL buy-in could be achieved through performance-related incentives for academics and financial support to students who embark on WIL projects.

Graduate employability research is also essential for clear and accurate evaluation of the implemented GWR solutions. The impact of GWR measures on the attitudes, skills and workplace productivity of graduates is of particular interest. Such research is strongly encouraged and could be backed by the government.

5.2.2 Relationship between government/parastatal bodies and employers

Our research also indicated insufficient employer awareness on the various government-initiated projects aimed at promoting employable graduates. The Dual Training Programme (DTP), for

example, is an excellent apprenticeship initiative that can be adopted by employers to recruit young people who, not only benefit from tertiary level training tailored to company needs, but also spend some days per week within the organisation to understand its operations and embrace its culture. Yet, since its inception in 2015 until February 2017, only twenty-five companies have registered on the DTP (The Ministry of Labour Industrial Relations Employment and Training 2017). Greater awareness on the benefits of this programme might encourage more organisations to embark on DTP ventures for a more employable Mauritian workforce.

While the Mauritian government provides several incentives such as full and partial company refunds for DTP trainee stipend and fees respectively, further governmental encouragement could motivate employers to better contribute to graduate work-readiness. These could include special initiatives (e.g. tax rebates) for companies which engage in joint employability ventures (such as work placements, mentoring opportunities, client projects and effective company input in curriculum design) with tertiary education institutions.

A number of companies in Mauritius have already established graduate training programmes to ease graduates' transition into the world of work. Companies such as Barclays have also developed short online courses to familiarise students with workplace expectations even before they step out of university. While many employability skills (e.g. communication, teamwork and self-efficacy) remain generic across disciplines, different industries also have their specificities. For example, in addition to soft skills, the IT industry might wish graduates to be abreast with latest technologies which might not have been included in their course curriculum, and the Tourism industry might wish to train graduates further on global practices and customer service. Industry-specific Centres of Excellence could thus be set up with the support of the government to provide sector-tailored GWR training.

To further increase the participation of employers in WIL projects, the government could provide support including guidelines on the appointment of industry mentors, WIL project scope agreement, student performance evaluation templates, and successful WIL case studies as examples of best practice.

The importance of company Human Resource (HR) professionals in the development of work-ready graduates cannot be underestimated. As suggested by Verma et al. (2018), HR managers could take multiple roles in reinforcing the relationship between government and industry. As “policy influencer”, HR professionals could work with their government counterparts to institutionalise practices such as the Industry Centre of Excellence to boost graduate employability. Company HR could also act as “facilitators” to not only assist in more frequent exchange of information between industry and the government for a more comprehensive insight of the GWR issue, but also ensure active and significant company representation on educational regulatory committees and government employability programmes. As “catalysts”, HR managers could assist the government in actively promoting and supporting WIL activities.

5.2.3 Relationship between employers and tertiary education institutions

Graduate work-readiness depends heavily on a robust relationship between employers and tertiary education institutions (TEIs). Although a number of efforts are being made at both ends, our study revealed that industry and TEIs need to work more closely together to better build student employability. We believe that Work Integrated Learning is one of the key solutions to strengthening this relationship. While structured internships has been widely adopted by TEIs in Mauritius, WIL goes beyond the traditional work placement to include an array of both co- and extra-curricular opportunities to support experiential learning. Student industry projects, service-

learning opportunities in collaboration with companies and NGOs, as well as regular participation in industry-led competitions are authentic WIL learning platforms where students not only put their textbook concepts into practice, but also develop their soft skills. Real-life assessments, industry simulations, current case studies and guest lectures from industry experts also help in filling the gap between the world of tertiary education and that of work. Through such WIL endeavours, students are encouraged to break out of their comfort cocoons and build their pre-professional identity by discovering workplace expectations and networking with industry professionals. This could be further supported by industry through mentorship programmes where students are paired with an industry mentor to share his/her workplace experience and answer any questions that the mentee could have about the world of work. Such an initiative has been adopted by organisations such as Barclays and could be extended to other companies as well.

While the success of WIL projects need to be evaluated through industry and mentor feedback, it is also critical for student WIL participants to reflect on their experience for improved learning. We strongly encourage TEIs to organise reflection presentations to support reflection reports and provide students with the opportunity to recognise their strengths and areas of improvement so as to boost their employability. Industry presence during such presentations would serve to further provide feedback to the presenter on how to be more work-ready.

As with the government, company HR professionals also need to play a more active role for deeper links between industry and TEIs. As “facilitators”, HR managers could assist in increasing industry involvement both in programme design and delivery, as well as providing more industry feedback on graduate requirements. They could also “catalyse” the implementation of WIL programmes by channelling TEIs to the right experts for the project, appointing industry mentors, and even counselling students during mock interview sessions organised by TEIs. Industry input and support

in GWR research is also critical to better address the problem. It is hoped that this could also be further supported by HR professionals.

5.2.4 National Work Integrated Learning Committee

As a governmental support for the GWRISF, we propose the setup of a National Work Integrated Learning Committee under the aegis of the HRDC and involving TEIs, industry and government representatives. The committee would be responsible for the development of a National Work Integrated Learning Strategy which would serve to encourage, guide, support and reward all stakeholders involved in the betterment of the young Mauritian workforce. Once the strategy established, the committee would meet regularly for its continuous review, as well as the development of performance indicators to evaluate the scope of WIL offerings and the level of satisfaction of student and industry WIL participants.

Inspired from the national university WIL strategy of Australia (“National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning in University Education” 2015), the National Work Integrated Learning Strategy would focus on government leadership for the promotion of WIL initiatives, and facilitate industry and university engagement for the development of work-ready graduates. It would further catalyse the governmental drive for graduate employability and through added incentives, awareness and support, could better motivate employers, tertiary education institutions and students in addressing the challenge.

The National Work Integrated Learning Strategy could assist in enhancing the employability drive, enlarging WIL possibilities and addressing any WIL barriers through:

1. The appointment of WIL champions in relevant ministries to boost the WIL agenda.

2. The development of a database of WIL activities to better gauge the current range and quality of WIL offerings and their resulting student experience for continuous improvement.
3. Clear definition of WIL and its associated scope of responsibilities for universities, employers and students.
4. Promotion of WIL through, clear definition of its benefits to stakeholders involved, examples of best practice and case studies.
5. Guidance for WIL preparation, implementation and evaluation. This could include assistance for embedding WIL within the curriculum, its evaluation and quality assurance, as well as staff training to strengthen WIL capacity.
6. Clear definition and communication of the workplace status of WIL participants to avoid any possible confusion relating to areas such as the scope of duties, workplace insurance, as well as health and safety.
7. Support and encouragement of WIL research including the impact of WIL on graduate outcomes.
8. A reward and recognition structure for stakeholder buy-in (e.g. academic staff performance incentives, university and employer tax benefits, and financial support to students).
9. Facilitate access to universities and the workplace to promote industry and university engagement in WIL practices.
10. Encourage WIL content in both HE and VE curricula to satisfy course accreditation requirements.

11. Encouraging international student exchange by facilitating visa procedures, and readily providing any other relevant information.

5.3 Limitations and future research

The list of GWR stakeholders extends beyond the ones studied. For example, while one of the issues identified in this study lies in the largely family-driven academic focus of graduates, a deeper understanding of the family's influence would bring added insight into the problem. This study is also limited to the work-readiness perception of final year students. Future work could investigate the perspective of TEI alumni in the workplace for a better understanding of GWR. The role of HR professionals in fostering stronger industry links both with the government and TEIs can also be further explored. In addition, although this study aimed at studying the work-readiness of graduates from both HE and VE sectors, despite repeated attempts, we were unable to access both the management and students of the largest VE provider on the island. It is hoped that future research in the field will be more successful in eliciting their views.

5.4 Conclusion

This study explores the challenges of graduate work-readiness in Mauritius from government, industry, TEIs and student perspectives. While all stakeholders were found to have considerable interest in the development of employable graduates, their linkages remain to be strengthened to forge more productive relationships. To address this issue, a Graduate Work-Readiness Integrated Stakeholder Framework (GWRISF) supported by a National Work Integrated Learning Strategy is proposed. It is envisaged that these recommendations shall assist all stakeholders included in

this study to better develop symbiotic relationships for more fruitful collaborations in addressing the issue of graduate work-readiness.

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Appendix A: Interview questions

1. What is the extent and nature of work-readiness/employability challenges facing employers, governments, VE and HE institutions across the selected economies?

1.1 Which particular professions, trades and/or industry sectors appear to have the most serious work-readiness challenges?

1.2 Are there differences in these work-readiness challenges between VE and HE systems (if so, please explain)

2. What are the causes of these challenges? Which stakeholders and institutions (governments, educational systems, employers and graduates) are most associated with these causes, and how are they responsible?

3. What are the consequences of these work-readiness challenges?

3.1 Which employability skills are difficult to find on the work market?

4. What current strategies and approaches have (a) governments, (b) educational institutions, and (c) other key stakeholders (e.g., employers, employer associations) developed to address these challenges?

5. How effective have the strategies identified been to date? Where do there appear to be gaps/problems?

- 5.1 To what extent have graduates embraced the programmes developed?
- 5.2 How effective was the partnership among stakeholders in strategies implemented?
- 5.3 What have been the outcomes/results (e.g. number of participants, completion rate, employability, etc.) of programmes implemented?
- 5.4 What else can be done to improve graduate employability in Mauritius?

6. Are there any particular case studies which illustrate the success or failure of approaches to the work-readiness challenges?

Appendix B: Employer questionnaire

Graduate Work Readiness in Mauritius Research Project

Questionnaire – Employer

Name of Company:

Number of Employees in your organisation:

Challenges, Causes and Consequences of Graduate Work-Readiness

Q1:- Which positions within your organisation appear to have the most serious work-readiness¹ challenges when employing new graduates in Mauritius?

Q2:-What are the causes of the challenges associated with work-readiness of fresh graduates in Mauritius?

Q3:- What are the consequences of such challenges?

Q4:-In general, do you perceive any differences between Vocational Education (polytechnic) and Higher Education (University) graduates in terms of work-readiness? Why?

Work-Readiness Strategies

Q5:- What skills do a fresh Higher Education (University) graduate require to be work-ready in Mauritius?

Q6:-What skills do a fresh Vocational Education (polytechnic) graduate require to be work-ready in Mauritius?

Q7:-On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent have fresh graduates acquired the following competencies

¹ Work Readiness is defined as the right blend of skills to remain sustainable on the labour market (OECD, 2011).

1 - Not At All; 5 - Highly

	1	2	3	4	5
Self-Management Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Innovation and Creativity Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cognitive Capabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundation Skills such as Learning, Reading, Writing, Oral Communication and Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teamwork and political skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
IT Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
System Thinking Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Core Business Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q8:- Have you been involved in any of the following graduate work-readiness programmes?

Graduate Training for Employment Scheme (GTES)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth Employment Programs (YEP)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dual Training Programme (DTP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Career Guidance Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work Integrated Learning such as internships and authentic industry projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	Service to Mauritius	<input type="checkbox"/>
None: (Specify why):			
Other (Please Specify):			

If answer is NONE – Go to Question 13.

Q9:- How successful were these programmes?

1- Not Successful at all; 5 – Highly Successful

1		2		3		4		5
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

Q10:-What factors contributed to the success of these programmes? (OE)

Q11:-Does your organisation collaborate with other stakeholders when implementing graduate work readiness programmes? If yes, how successful has the collaboration been?

Q12:-What were the major challenges faced with any of the graduate work-readiness programmes implemented?

Q13:-What else could be done to improve graduate employability in Mauritius?

Thank you.

Appendix C: Higher Education and Vocational Education

Institution questionnaire

Graduate Work Readiness in Mauritius Research Project

Questionnaire – Higher Education/Vocational Education Institutions

Name of Institution:

Challenges, Causes and Consequences of Graduate Work-Readiness

Q14:- Are there any profession(s) that appear to have the most serious work-readiness² challenges when employing new graduates in Mauritius?

Q15:- What are the causes of the challenges associated with work-readiness of fresh graduates in Mauritius?

Q16:- What are the consequences of such challenges?

Q17:- In general, do you perceive any differences between Vocational Education (polytechnic) and Higher Education (University) graduates in terms of work-readiness? Why?

Work-Readiness Strategies

Q18:- What skills do a fresh Higher Education (University) graduate require to be work-ready in Mauritius?

Q19:- What skills do a fresh Vocational Education (polytechnic) graduate require to be work-ready in Mauritius?

Q20:- On a scale of 1 to 5, indicate how far the development of the following competencies or graduate attributes are reinforced at your institution.

1 - Not Reinforced At All; 5 - Highly Reinforced

² Work Readiness is defined as the right blend of skills to remain sustainable on the labour market (OECD, 2011).

	1	2	3	4	5
Self-Management Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Innovation and Creativity Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cognitive Capabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundation Skills such as Learning, Reading, Writing, Oral Communication and Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teamwork and political skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
IT Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
System Thinking Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Core Business Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q21:-Have you been involved in any of the following graduate work-readiness programmes?

Graduate Training for Employment Scheme (GTES)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth Employment Programs (YEP)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dual Training Programme (DTP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Career Guidance Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work Integrated Learning such as internships and authentic industry projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	Service to Mauritius	<input type="checkbox"/>
None: (Specify why):			
Other (Please Specify):			

If answer is NONE – Go to Question 13.

Q22:-How successful were these programmes?

1- Not Successful at all; 5 – Highly Successful

1		2		3		4		5
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

Q23:-What factors contributed to the success of these programmes?

Q24:-Does your institution collaborate with other stakeholders when implementing graduate work readiness programmes? If yes, how successful has the collaboration been?

Q25:- What were the major challenges faced with any of the graduate work-readiness programmes implemented?

Q26:- What else could be done to improve graduate employability in Mauritius?

Thank you.

Appendix D: Student survey questionnaire

Graduate Work Readiness in Mauritius

Questionnaire - Student

Name of Institution: Charles Telfair Institute

Course of Study:

Challenges, Causes and Consequences of Graduate Work-Readiness

1. According to you, what are the challenges associated with being productive as from day one in the workplace (Graduate Work-Readiness)?

2. What are the causes of these challenges?

3. What are the skills that you believe to be important to be productive in the workplace?

4. On a scale of 1-5, rate to what extent you think that you have the necessary skills required to be productive right from day one in the workplace? [1- not at all, 5- to a large extent]

1 (Not at All)	2	3	4	5 (To a Large Extent)
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. On a scale of 1-5, rate to what extent you believe have acquired the following skills

1 - Not at all

5 – Highly

	1	2	3	4	5
Self-management (social skills, character traits, conflict management, and time management)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On-the-job training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Team work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Have you been involved in any of the following graduate work-readiness programmes? (Tick all that applies)

Graduate Training for Employment Scheme (GTES)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth Employment Programs (YEP)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dual Training Programme (DTP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Career Guidance Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work Integrated Learning such as internships and authentic industry projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	Service to Mauritius	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please Specify):			
None: (Specify why):			

7. How successful have they been in making you work-ready?

1- Not Successful at all

5 – Highly Successful

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. What factors contributed to the success of these programmes?

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9. What were the major challenges faced with any of the graduate work-readiness programmes implemented?

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10. What could be done to improve graduate employability in Mauritius?

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Thank You.

Appendix E: Interview findings

Question 1. What is the extent and nature of work-readiness/employability challenges facing employers, governments, VE and HE institutions across the selected economies?

- **Employability is not embedded in the regulatory requirements of the MQA** e.g. there is focus on content, mode of delivery, required tools, exam procedures but not soft skills.
- **Communication skills** are strongly lacking among graduates.
- Students are prepared for jobs and **not life skills** – the numbers produced are there but they are **unable to meet requirements in terms of GK, rigour, writing skills, problem-solving** and skills such as **anger management** and **management of emotions**. This problem is increasing over time and widespread.
- **University courses are too theoretical (academic) with insufficient focus on soft skills** [feedback obtained from industry is never about poor knowledge – it's always about the inability to adjust to the exigencies of the workplace]
- **Internships** are crucial to tertiary level education and **should be better structured**.
- The main focus of most universities in Mauritius is to **generate knowledge** and not prepare the graduate to be employable.
- Lack of **entrepreneurial skills**
- **Both universities and employers are not doing enough** to help graduates to be employable.
- **Social capital** – people with good networks get better internships and have an edge over their counterparts in terms of work-readiness.

Question 1.1 What is the extent and nature of work-readiness/employability challenges facing employers, governments, VE and HE institutions across the selected economies?

- **There is no specific sector in Mauritius where work-readiness is not an issue.** Most graduates (especially the ones who have studied locally) do not have sufficient soft skills. Perception that graduates who have studied abroad are more employable than those who have studied locally as they are more independent, communicate better and learn to manage their time and finances better.
- Bakery, Poultry and Construction – but this answer aligns with Skills Mismatch more than GWR
- **Goes across professional fields** – issue is not with discipline knowledge but mostly with soft skills.
- **The IT industry – cannot find people at all levels**

Question 1.2 Are there differences in these work-readiness challenges between VE and HE systems (if so, please explain)

- Vocational graduates **ARE** employable – this can be explained by the **practical nature** of VE courses and the involvement of industry e.g. **ITACs** in the setting up of VE diplomas at national level. VE courses also include **internships** supported by institution-level coordinators and industry mentors.

- Vocational graduates **ARE** more employable as there is greater focus on the practical side as opposed to universities which focus more on the academic side.
- **Vocational graduates are more employable** – practical nature of their course and because the course content is mostly mounted by industry representatives (ITACs) with even a focus on soft skills to be integrated into the programme.
- Vocational sector has more **current** input from industry whereas for the higher education sector, many of the programmes are frozen in time (no evolving to take into account the changing requirements of the market)
- Vocational graduates **ARE** more employable because the nature of the course is more hands on.

Question 2. What are the causes of these challenges? Which stakeholders and institutions (governments, educational systems, employers) are most associated with these causes, and how are they responsible?

- **Poor linkages between universities and industry.**
- **Family and culture** (for many people, going to university is more about status than preparation for a job; reluctance to gain work experiences from lower-level jobs e.g. working at McDonald's)
- **Attitude** – graduates need to learn humility
- **Insufficient capability in terms of HR** (money is not an issue) – need for dedicated and specialised people.
- **Attitude** – some people refuse 9 to 4 jobs even after they get trained.
- **Society (culture)** – lingering focus on academic and not practical.
- **Tertiary programmes are not adapted/updated** to meet the current needs of the industry
- **Lack of industry input** [they do not want to share information with their competitors]
- **Culture and attitude** - Feeling that graduates join university just for the piece of paper and they only do the bare minimum. "It does not count for exams so not required". "We enrolled on the course, paid the fees therefore it is our right to obtain a qualification and a well-paid job afterwards." **This behaviour starts right from primary and secondary levels where there is very little interest in extra-curricular activities both at the level of parents and the students** – the focus is on academics alone.
- **Societal phenomenon** - It is also about an easy culture (everything is easily available so why should I struggle to get a job)
- **Competition culture** fuelled by the rat race which shapes a character of selfishness and narrowed vision to the detriment of collective work. People just follow a course, take the exams and that's all they care about.
- **Changed societal value system – attitude** - graduates often shun hard work, do not want to start at lower levels and prefer to stay at home and wait passively for the dream job to fall on their lap – The **family institution** could be responsible for this challenge.
- **The education system** – free education does not have any value if it does not prepare citizens for the right skills.
- **Insufficient dialogue** between education institutions and industry – the private sector seems reluctant to share information about what they really need or even to share their recruitment practices.

- **Insufficient government initiative** – people have no incentive to get out of their comfort zone. It is a social syndrome. People are neither rewarded for being entrepreneurial nor punished for being passive. Policy and vision is the government's responsibility.
- **The curriculum itself – too theoretical** with insufficient focus on employability skills.
- **Learning and teaching is also an issue** – one-way teaching in many institutions – little emphasis on case studies and group work which could help develop employability skills.
- **Attitude** – graduates prefer to wait rather than embarking on graduate employability training schemes. They also refuse to take jobs that may not be aligned to what they studied in their degree – they do not understand that a degree is often nothing but a stepping stone into the workplace. There are also high expectations with regard to starting salaries.
- **Lack of collaboration and synergy among the tri-factor -institutions, industry and government** – e.g. (1) advisory committee set up to design programmes are not always effective, (2) surveys carried out to understand industry needs have poor response rates particularly from the private sector which does not wish to share information due to competition and also is not bothered as the perception is that there will be no action taken anyway.
- Focus was on Skills Mismatch and not employability per say. Reasons provided were (1) **insufficient career counselling**, (2) **insufficient focus on communication skills** at higher level institutions resulting in lack of confidence, and (3) **attitude** problems from graduates.

Question 3. What are the consequences of these work-readiness challenges?

- **Frustrated/stressed graduates (not getting the jobs they wish to get) and employers (not finding the right employees)**
- **Economy suffers – as quality and quantity of work suffers**
- **Increase in the number of unemployed or underemployed graduates.**
- **Unemployment, lack of skilled labour**
- **Socially**, more and more people are going to be frustrated if they do not get a job (whether they deserve it or not)
- **Politically**, there will be more pressure on the govt to reduce unemployment

4. What current strategies and approaches have (a) governments, (b) educational institutions, and (c) other key stakeholders (e.g., employers, employer associations) developed to address these challenges?

- **One strategy is internships**
- **HRDC has come up with programmes such as YEP, GTES ,NSDP**
- **ITACs** – but that's mostly for Skills Mismatch
- **GTES, setting up pf polytechnics, WBL (Work based learning), Lower-six placement, Ministry in partnership with British council for communication competitions**

- **YEP, GTES, NSDP, setting up of polytechnics. Improved career counselling programme** starting from primary to secondary and tertiary

5. How effective have the strategies identified been to date? Where do there appear to be gaps/problems?

- **Communication problem** – people seem to be unaware or are unreceptive towards the solutions proposed
- **Universities need to have a strong link with industry** for internships to be well structured.
- **Lack of information and awareness** about available schemes (people may not understand the direct benefits)
- **Issue of attitude (graduate will not settle for any other job other than the one he has set himself and will not do anything else to reach required level) even at the level of the programmes e.g. WBL trainees not taking much initiative.**
- **Lack of participation on programmes (e.g. British council competition, GTES) – “We sometimes feel that we can bring the horse to the water but we cannot get it to drink”**
- **Lack of resources for career counselling.**
- **Some programmes have worked (e.g. the GTES with UTM and 5 companies for IT upskilling) but others less.**
- **Reluctance to participate on the programme** – some people prefer to sit and wait rather than to undergo further training to be employable [cultural]

Question 5.1 To what extent have graduates embraced the programmes developed?

- The problem with the HRDC schemes relates to **insufficient numbers** which is often a question of attitude (graduates do not want further training and prefer to wait for a job rather than registering on the available schemes), or sometimes the stipend is insufficient and they drop out if they secure a job.
- **Lack of interest or graduate unawareness**
- **High drop-out rates** for some programmes (around 20%)

Question 5.2 How effective was the partnership among stakeholders in strategies implemented?

- **No or wrong industry representative on ITACs** - industry representatives do not always attend ITACs meetings or the people who do attend are not wary of the needs of the industry (e.g. person who attends is often from higher management level and may not always be abreast with the skills required from the vocational training)
- **Good collaboration among skills set group members**
- **No proper bridging between stakeholders**
- **Strong desire to work together** to better address the challenge.
- **In general, partnerships with industry has been effective on the programmes.**

Question 5.4 What else can be done to improve graduate employability in Mauritius?

- **Learning and Teaching** has to focus more on graduate attributes (employability skills)
- **Ongoing dialogue among institutions, gvt and employers**
- Ways must be found to **better communicate** strategies devised to stakeholders concerned.
- **Development of life skills should be a continuous** – starting from primary school
- **Back to basics** – family to inculcate values based on hard work
- **Think Tanks** – to assist government in the setting up of policies
- **Skills should be embedded into the curriculum** (not optional)
- **Reduce class size and adopt a personalised service** in education (e.g. streaming) to attend to specific needs.
- **Promote awareness about career readiness – teachers and mentors have a role to play. Graduate has to understand the importance (and that he is not the king of the world)**
- **The ministry is about to implement and evaluate student attributes dictated by industry**
- More work needs to be done on the **assessment of programmes** to ensure that industry requirements are met and that graduates do not have the wrong perception of the skills that need to be acquired on a particular programme.
- Improved career guidance
- Soft skills should be integrated into the course content.
- Encourage graduates to go for **professional courses** to top up their degree.