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LET'S GET READY FOR WORK – EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN AN IS CAPSTONE PROJECT

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[Note: Authorship order is alphabetical - all authors contributed roughly equally to the research.]

ABSTRACT

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| Aim/Purpose | This study aims to explore undergraduate IS students' employability skills development while performing their final capstone project during their academic studies. |
| Background | The importance of soft skills in the Information Systems industry is not an arguable fact and has been broadly discussed both in the industry and the academic literature. The ability of professionals to collaborate, communicate, manage time, negotiate, solve problems, make decisions, and self-learning, called employability skills, are essential skills needed in today's industry. The development of these skills during undergraduate studies is essential for graduate students' readiness for work. |
| Methodology | A mixed methods approach was employed using exploratory research design, including qualitative and quantitative approaches. First, a qualitative analysis of 156 reflections was performed, resulting in the conceptual framework of facets. Then, a quantitative analysis of the data was performed to examine the facets and the differences between the stages of the capstone project. |

The full paper has been published as the following and is being presented at this conference:

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| Contribution | This study contributes to both academy and industry. The former may use this study's findings to upgrade academy courses and capstone projects in order to raise students' readiness for the industry. The later may learn the approaches the academy use and give appropriate feedback. |
| Findings | The results showed that students' reflections on their motivation, knowledge, and skills (teamwork, time management, and inter-communication) demonstrate the importance of those facets in the process they underwent, especially since the reflections collected were unstructured. |
| Recommendations for Practitioners | Information Systems undergraduate academic programs should develop structured capstone projects to provide the students with a better platform to learn and experience the employability skills the industry requires. |
| Recommendations for Researchers | The study presents a conceptual model based on students' reflections on their experience performing a capstone project. The impact and influence of each of the model's components should be further researched and measured. |
| Impact on Society | Moreover, it is very important to prepare the students for employability by including a "real-life" capstone project at the end of their undergraduate studies to prepare them to be valuable in the workforce, even at their start point as juniors. |
| Future Research | To evaluate the process of employability skills development, a further study can examine students' perceptions prior to the capstone, during, and after to assess the progress and changes. To generalize the results, it would be valuable to investigate whether the findings of this study are consistent across different institutions and disciplines |
| Keywords | employability skills, capstone projects, soft skills, motivation, information systems studies, student reflections |

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