

# Employers' Perspectives of English-Major Students' Weaknesses During Their Industrial Practicum

Phuong Hoang Yen

School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam

Le Thanh Thao

School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam

Ho Phuong Thuy

School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam

Do Thanh Nhan

School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam

Pham Trut Thuy

Nam Can Tho University, Can Tho, Vietnam

**Abstract**—In the 21st century, graduates are expected to have many employability skills to become successful employees in real-world settings. Before graduating, the industrial practicum is an excellent chance for employers to measure university students' readiness for real jobs through their performances. Even though some studies have been conducted in this field, the topic is little studied from employers' perceptions. This current study focused on employers' reports on what English-major students lacked during their industrial practicum in the Vietnamese context. The study was conducted as qualitative research using three focus-group interviews, and each included five employers in the fields of education, business, interpretation and translation, and tour and travel. The results revealed that the students lacked several skills to become successful employees: communication skills, information retrieval and handling skills, planning and problem-solving skills, teamwork skills, self-confidence, critical thinking skills, devotion, and specialized skills/ identities. Based on the findings, this current study suggested several practical implications to help improve the students' employability skills. During their time at university, English-major students need more practical experiences to understand their strengths and weaknesses and develop themselves. Teaching is expected to make a positive correlation with practical experiences in real-world settings. The findings of this study significantly contributed to enriching the field of vocational education.

**Index Terms**—employers' perspectives, English-major students, industrial practicum, weaknesses

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, graduates need many more skills and attributes to become successful employees. According to Suarta et al. (2017), occupation-specific certificates are not enough for graduates to meet the requirements of national and international labor markets anymore. In other words, employees are expected to have primary and specific knowledge and skills; they, moreover, need an additional set of employability skills to meet the needs of their appropriate graduate jobs. According to Nydegger and Enides (2017), the current work environment is different from what happened in the past. Rapid change and development remarkably affect the global job market and increase job competition. Degree classifications are not as important as knowledge and awareness of how the world runs (Bathmaker, 2013). Job seekers will encounter many challenges if they think they can become successful employees based on their good or excellent degrees.

According to Carlgren (2013), graduates' three most important skills are critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication. Regarding a different perspective, Saunders and Zuzel (2010) indicated that rapid technological development requires students to have the skills and abilities to work in various working environments. In other words, adaptabilities are essential for graduates to be successful. Nonetheless, the mismatch between job skills and the employability skills needed in real-world settings is often the main barrier to university students after graduating. The main reason is that there has been a significant gap between education, training, and workplace requirements (Cattaneo & Aprea, 2018). Mason et al. (2009) suggested increasing students' employability skills during days of learning at their

higher educational institutions. One of the critical events to help students' employability skills is industrial practicum which provides the students with an excellent chance to experience real-working settings. During the internship, students are expected to enhance their work readiness and apply the knowledge learned in university to practical situations (Shariff & Muhamad, 2010).

Additionally, through the interns' weaknesses, employers and stakeholders can evaluate to what extent higher education institutions complete their missions and goals to develop the future workforce for national and international job markets. In Vietnam, English Studies students are not trained to specify a particular professional. Mostly, these students learn about linguistics and cultures in English-speaking countries. Unlike the Teaching English as a Foreign Language program, which trains its students to become English teachers, English studies majors fail to specify their professional identities. The program's outcomes are to provide the labor market with a workforce strong in English to work in different areas, such as education, tour and travel, interpretation and translation, and the like. However, these graduates lack technical or specialized skills as the program mainly focuses on English linguistics and cultures. Therefore, doing an industrial practicum in the final year is even more critical as it is an excellent chance to select the areas they will work for after graduating. In other words, these bachelors would have a perfect chance to experience real-world settings as well as (re)construct their future aims. Accordingly, this current qualitative study aims to determine the English major students' weaknesses observed by their employers during the industrial practicum. As so, the curriculum can then backfill these skills into the curriculum.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Industrial Practicum*

Studies have indicated the positive impact of the industrial practicum on interns' communication skills, personal growth, self-awareness of context, and organizational culture in real-world settings (Klink & Streumer, 2002; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002; Maistre & Pare, 2004). There are three main parties in an industrial practicum: the trainees, the facilitators from the host companies/organizations, and the schools. Host organizations are companies/institutions that voluntarily provide students with training on their job skills and work experience through on-job training. During the training, the trainees can apply theory learned in their universities to practical institutions, gain more work experience and improve their job skills. The third party is the schools/universities of the trainees that expect their learners will have sufficient training on their employability skills. Industrial practicum is essential for students' employability skills as it provides fundamental tasks in authentic contexts.

### B. *Essential Attributes for Graduates*

Due to the changing world of work, many graduates' attributes, including employability skills and characteristics, have received much attention from stakeholders and employers. Generally, graduates' attributes and employability skills are necessary to compete with others in the job market and promote employment (Phuong & Huynh, 2020). Without sufficient attributes, employees cannot meet their employers' requirements. Australian Department of Education, Science, and Training (2001) enlisted the eight core skills for Australian employees: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organizing, self-management, learning, and technology skills. Yorke and Knight (2006) proposed a set of employability skills consisting of personal qualities, core skills, and process skills. In Indonesia, Nugroho and Nizam (2013) specified 11 essential skills for graduates: communication, teamwork, integrity, intellectual capacity, self-confidence, personality/individual character, planning, writing, computing, analytical and problem-solving, and other additional skills. Suarta (2012) also contributed to the framework for Indonesian graduates with six employability skills: workplace health and safety, self-management, teamwork, learning, technology, and problem-solving. Sirat et al. (2012) indicated that Malaysian graduates must have the following skills to become successful employees in this era. The graduates are expected to have critical thinking and creativity, preparedness to serve others, personal transferable skills, cognitive, emotional, and moral development, and practical competence. In a nutshell, graduates are expected to have a wide range of attributes and competencies. Specifically, communication skills, logical, analytical, problem-solving, personal qualities (characteristics, self-confidence, and integrity), flexibility and adaptability, critical thinking and creativity, and teamwork skills are essential (Bilsland, 2014; Tran, 2017).

### C. *Related Studies*

Regarding the negative impact of graduates' skill shortage on the growth of the Indian economy, Blom and Saeki (2011) conducted their survey to determine what skills are essential to new employees, to what extent employers satisfy with their employees' core skills, and what skills the employees need more improvements. The results showed that more than half of 157 employers (64%) participating in the study were somewhat satisfied with the new employees because these employees lacked higher-order thinking skills. On the other hand, employers were satisfied with employees' English-speaking skills. Soft skills, including communication and core employability skills, were also perceived to be the most important.

Gagalang (2020) employed a mixed-methods approach to collect data from 21 employers in various career sectors in the Philippines. The data collected by a questionnaire and 21 interviews indicated the employers' satisfaction with

English major graduates' personal qualities, consisting of determination, persistence, self-discipline, and specified skills, such as fluency and accuracy in English speaking, creativity, and writing skills. However, according to the employers, the students needed to improve their abilities in using English in different contexts, planning and organizing, leadership skills, and communicative competencies.

Matsouka and Mihail (2016) investigated the perspectives of university graduates and human resource managers on graduates' employability skills, especially soft skills. In the study, data collected from 178 graduates from a university and 29 human resource managers in Greece indicated a mismatch between these participants' views. Specifically, the graduates were over-confident, but the human resource managers were not satisfied with the graduates' soft skills.

Graduates' employability skills are undoubtedly essential for evaluating a higher educational institution's quality of teaching and learning, especially those in the service of the economy and labor market. However, it still lacks research on this issue in the Vietnamese context. Besides, previous studies mainly highlighted the employers' perceptions of graduates' employability skills but not those of undergraduates during their industrial practicum. Therefore, this study addressed the gap in Vietnamese employers' perspectives on English major undergraduates' employability skills during their industrial internship. Accordingly, this current study aims to answer the following research question: "What weaknesses, according to employers, do English-major undergraduates have during the industrial practicum?"

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design

This study was conducted qualitatively. According to Maxwell (1998), a qualitative study can help researchers profoundly gauge their participants' thoughts. Consequently, the present qualitative study would help gain an in-depth understanding of employers' perspectives on what English-major students lack during their practicum in real-world settings. Besides, it promisingly provided readers with a profound understanding of what mistakes English-major undergraduates usually make and cause their employers' disappointment. As so, the study would help many stakeholders, such as teachers, curriculum developers, and tertiary students, to adjust their work and become fitter with the requirements of employers.

#### B. Participants

Three focus-group interviews were conducted to collect data. Each group included five employers in different areas: education, tourism, translation and interpretation, business, and tour and travel. These fifteen employers are managers or team leaders in real-world settings where nearly 500 English-major students had their very first work experiences in their careers during the industrial practicum. At first, the research team sent invitation letters to thirty leaders/managers of the host organizations providing training for the students. However, half had personal reasons and decided to reject the invitation. Therefore, fifteen out of thirty became the actual participants of this study. The information of the participants is displayed in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
PARTICIPANTS

No.	Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Professional areas	Group
1	Oliver	Male	<30	Business Administration	1
2	Olivia	Female	>30 & <40	Translation and Interpretation	1
3	Emma	Female	>30 & <40	Education	1
4	William	Male	<30	Business Administration	1
5	Charlotte	Female	>30 & <40	Education	1
6	James	Male	>40	Education	2
7	Lucas	Male	>30 & <40	Tour and Travel	2
8	Amelia	Female	>30 & <40	Education	2
9	Sophia	Female	>30 & <40	Education	2
10	Isabella	Female	<30	Business Administration	2
11	Mia	Female	>30 & <40	Education	3
12	Liam	Male	<30	Translation and Interpretation	3
13	Noah	Male	>30 & <40	Translation and Interpretation	3
14	David	Male	>30 & <40	Tour and Travel	3
15	Ava	Female	>30 & <40	Education	3

During the practicum, the students were expected to use English as much as possible. Accordingly, the students were sent to potential companies or organizations guaranteeing students an English-using environment. Many English-major students chose to experience their practicum in educational institutions, such as schools or language centers. Accordingly, the participants mostly worked in education (N=7). Similarly, the participants showed the percentage of students at internship units during the practicum (50% in education, 20% in business administration, 20% in translation and interpretation, and 10% in others). Notably, four participants worked in business administration, one in translation and interpretation, and one in tour and travel. To ensure the students' experiences in real-world settings where they could use English, the school of the students chose two practicum coordinators to get in touch with the students during the event. No report was collected from the coordinators about students lacking an English-using environment. Therefore, the research team was confident that the students were given enough chances to use their English and other

employability skills during the practicum. As a consequence, employers could observe and evaluate the students' performances as well as their employability skills.

The researchers used pseudonyms to quote their excerpts in the following sections to keep the participants' information confidential. Before analyzing the data, the employers were asked for permission to use their words in the interviews as primary data for this study. The transcripts were also sent to them to check whether there were any make-up stories in the report. Besides, the participants could withdraw from the study if they found the data unreliable or damaging to their identities.

### C. Data Collection Instrument

This current study employed two focus group interviews to collect data. According to Vaughn et al. (1996), using focus group interviews allows researchers to group people with a common issue. Accordingly, they have something to discuss during the interview. The focus group interviews would give the participants with an excellent chance to listen to others and reflect on their own experiences (Krueger, 2006). Accordingly, they would have more ideas to discuss the problems in their practice as well as compare theirs to others' issues.

### D. Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The researchers followed these steps. First, all members read through the data to get familiar with them. Then, they reread and coded the data in groups with content related to what employability skills students lacked during the practicum. Specifically, they include communication skills, information retrieval and handling skills, planning and problem-solving skills, teamwork skills, critical thinking and creativity, professional skills, and some attributes preventing them from success. Remarkably, they coded the contents in different colors. Later, the research team scheduled a meeting to discuss the results that each member analyzed. The discussion lasted two hours to determine the differences and similarities in these analyses. The similarities were then kept, but the differences would be reviewed and discussed to decide whether they should be edited or deleted.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings would be presented based on the frequency of primary coded responses. More specifically, the more frequently mentioned ideas in the interviews would be presented before those less mentioned.

### A. Lack of Communication Skills

Most employers highlighted the lack of communication skills as a significant weakness of their English-major interns during practicum. Charlotte and Mia said,

I noticed that they [interns] did not have sufficient communication skills. Sometimes, I felt a bit uncomfortable as they chose inappropriate words to talk to others, especially my full-time employees.... (Charlotte).

I do not think the interns experiencing their practicum at my company are good at communication skills... Instead of talking to others, they mostly use mobile phones to chat or surf the internet. I do not think it is appropriate behavior (Mia).

According to the excerpts, Charlotte and Isabella underestimated their interns' oral communication skills. Unlike the employers, as mentioned earlier, Lucas was disappointed with the written communication skills of the interns. He stated, Interns' abilities to write e-mails or e-messages were a big problem preventing them from succeeding in their practicum. They even did not know how to write a well-formatted e-mail to me as their employer.... (Lucas).

Communication skills are always the top-tier ones for a successful employee in the 21st century (Blom & Saeki, 2011; Nugroho & Nizam, 2013; Sirat et al., 2012; Suarta, 2012; Yorke & Knight, 2006). The employers' complaints about their interns' oral and written communication skills expressed their disappointment in the future workforce. Concerning Vietnamese graduates' lack of communication skills, Tuan (2021) emphasized the negative impact of internet overuse. Notably, the rapid development of technology attracts Vietnamese students' attention, but it also prevents them from real-life interactions with others. Mostly, they use their communication devices, such as laptops, smartphones, or tablets, to surf the internet and read the news. Isabella's excerpt was a piece of evidence. Besides, students' inadequate e-mail writing skills were noticed by employers. The results differed from Gagalang's (2020) study as this author indicated employers' satisfaction with Pilipino English-major students' writing skills. In the Vietnamese context, e-mail writing is a genre that English-major students have learned in their mainstream programs (Vu & Peters, 2021). Therefore, English-major students' lack of e-mail writing skills required Vietnamese educators to recheck the quality of teaching and learning in higher education programs. Phan (2020) indicated that teaching and learning quality in higher education in Vietnam needs many things to develop and help its graduates be qualified enough to compete with citizens from other countries.

### B. Lack of Information Retrieval and Handling Skills

According to Ava and Olivier, while doing industrial practicum, English-major students failed to identify information needs to support their tasks or independently use appropriate information technology tools. They said,

When I assigned them a task, they asked me to explain everything without any self-explorations about what should be done for the task. Instead of perceiving the task as a great chance to develop their abilities, they thought I was giving them a hard time... (Ava).

They can easily find out the information needed on the internet for the tasks I assigned them to do. However, they kept asking all the time without searching... (Olivier).

Vietnamese students use the internet to search for the information they need as they spend the most time using communication devices to surf the internet (Tuan, 2021). However, according to William's and Olivier's excerpts, the student's internet use for needed information was under-expected while working in real-life settings. The information on the internet varies from sports, entertainment, education, and more. Moreover, not every piece of news on the internet is reliable or useful for its users (Schintler & Kulkarni, 2014). Therefore, it is difficult to determine what information is needed if the users are unaware of their concerns or problems. That might be why the students had asked their employers to explain their assigned tasks. However, the passiveness influenced by the Vietnamese culture was also displayed in the students' demands (Tran, 2013). The mismatch between the students' wants and employers' expectations was somehow apparent. While the employers aimed to help the students develop their information retrieval and handling skills, they focused on completing their assigned tasks without making mistakes. Fear of making mistakes and losing face have been positively correlated in the Vietnamese context for a long time (Brower, 1980). In other words, Vietnamese people tend to save their face by considering everything carefully before doing something, although consideration is not very much necessary. It was accurate to the current study since the students were perceived as passive in self-exploring information needed for their tasks when they asked their employers to explain the tasks even though the students could do it independently.

### C. *Lack of Planning and Problem-Solving Skills*

Lack of action plans for an unexpected problem was another noticeable weakness of English-major students during the practicum. Emma and Isabella stated,

Once my company organized a sudden meeting, and I wanted the interns to be there to join hands to complete an urgent task. However, they refused to come because the meeting was not organized during their working hours and they had to study an extra class... I think they should focus on their practicum only and prepare for unexpected situations like this during the practicum. Moreover, they do not know how harmful it is to their images in others' thinking (Emma).

Nowhere does not have problems, and my company, of course, is not an exception. Some problems happen suddenly that I cannot manage even though I play the role of a manager. Therefore, I always prepare for the bad situations that may come in the morning, afternoon, evening, or even at night... However, the students seemed not ready for that. When an unexpected problem occurred, I could easily recognize their puzzlement. Therefore, it will be very beneficial for them if they have some pretending bad situations when learning in universities to visualize what should be done in these situations (Isabella).

Similar to other employability skills, such as communication, teamwork, and the like, problem-solving is essential for graduates to succeed in real-life settings (Nugroho & Nizam, 2013; Sirat et al., 2012; Suarta, 2012; Yorke & Knight, 2006). Based on the excerpts, the students seemed to overlook the impact of the practicum on their images as well as future jobs since they might think this occasion is simply a subject in their program. However, the lack of action plans for unexpected problems during the practicum caused the employers' bad impressions of the interns. According to Shariff and Muhamad (2010), the practicum is a great chance for employers to evaluate whether the graduates are suitable for their requirements in a real-world setting or not. Therefore, it is also an excellent opportunity for students to show off the qualities to become full-time employees in their workplace during the practicum. The bad impressions might close the door for students to have excellent jobs in an era when the unemployment rate has significantly increased (Nguyen et al., 2021). However, Isabella's excerpt also pointed out an existing problem related to higher education in the Vietnamese context. Specifically, it is the mismatch between education and training and the practical needs of a graduate student (Le et al., 2020). In other words, the students lacked chances to encounter real-world situations requiring them to use their problem-solving skills to deal with while they were in school. Additionally, the findings also determined the need of informing students and employers about what they should do in the practicum. For instance, the students should mentally and physically prepare for their challenges, while the employers should not have too high expectations about their trainees' capacities. In fact, the nature of an internship and a practicum is to offer students a safe space during which to experience what real-world working situations are like and to have mentorship, guidance and support in this (Shariff & Muhamad, 2010).

### D. *Lack of Teamwork Skills*

According to the employers, the interns could not work effectively as team members, but observing their effectiveness while working individually was surprising. Sophia and James remarked,

I did not understand why they did not want to work with others. When working as a team, their products were so much under-expected. However, if required to do tasks individually, they would complete them with high quality.... (Sophia).

They worked in a team ineffectively. I used to assign them to work with others to complete a difficult task, but I was disappointed with the outcomes... Some students could complete their tasks well if they worked alone (James).

Social development and interaction skills are the most critical skills for a successful workforce in the 21st century (Nugroho & Nizam, 2013; Sirat et al., 2012; Suarta, 2012; Yorke & Knight, 2006). However, there is an existing paradox that the students as Gen Z-ers, who were born in the late 1990s, were good at independent working instead of teamwork skills (Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018). Otherwise, the employers demanded the interns to have sufficient teamwork skills as many projects required them to work in a team (Nugroho & Nizam, 2013; Sirat et al., 2012; Suarta, 2012; Yorke & Knight, 2006). The mismatch between the student's strengths and the employers' requirements seemed to cause several problems at work.

#### *E. Lack of Self-Confidence*

In the interviews, many employers highlighted the negative impact of students' lack of self-confidence on their productivity at work. Noah and William said,

It was very disadvantageous to the students who were not confident in themselves during the practicum. This was a good chance for them to try new things and experiences. However, lacking self-confidence prevented them from having a try.... (Noah).

It was bad for some students who did not dare to try new things during the practicum. I found that they were not confident... Sometimes, I did not understand why English-major students were not confident in themselves. I used to think that they must be more confident than others.... (William).

Self-confidence is an essential personal attribute directly affecting students' success in their practicum and future jobs. According to William's excerpt, English-major students were often perceived to be more confident than those who studied other social majors. The excerpt was understandable as the English-major students learned about linguistics and English-speaking countries' cultures. Usually, Western people are more sociable than Eastern ones (Nisbett & Masuda, 2003). Particularly, Greek students' over self-confidence was observed in the study by Matsouka and Mihail (2016). Accordingly, the exposure to Western cultural patterns was expected to positively affect Vietnamese students' self-confidence. However, the employers in this study seemed disappointed with their English-major interns' self-confidence during the practicum. It could be explained that even though the students had exposure to Western cultures, the cultural features of the Confucian heritage culture still shaped the Vietnamese students' passiveness in learning and working (Tran, 2013). Particularly, Vietnamese students are usually influenced by themselves, their families, the educational management system, policymakers, and university lecturers. As a result, they could not show their self-confidence in real-world settings.

#### *F. Lack of Critical Thinking*

Most employers were not satisfied with their interns' critical thinking. Particularly, David and Olivia said,

The students lacked critical thinking. I noticed that they just followed their mentors' instructions without any evaluations or considerations. Once I asked my employers as the students' mentors to give them a challenge. Particularly, the mentor would ask the students to talk behind a lecturer's back to make some fun. It was a terrible request. However, they did it because it was their mentor's request.... (David).

The interns said whatever they wanted without considering whether the information was correct or not. They usually used "I think this..." or, "I think that..." to start an argument. In these cases, I felt completely frustrated... (Olivia).

The finding results were in line with the study by Blom and Saeki (2011), which found that Indian employers felt disappointed with their new employees' critical thinking skills. In addition to communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, a successful employee must have critical thinking to analyze and evaluate the receiving information to reaffirm whether it is accurate or not (Nugroho & Nizam, 2013; Sirat et al., 2012; Suarta, 2012; Yorke & Knight, 2006). However, the employers' excerpts indicated that the English-major students failed to demonstrate critical thinking during the practicum. Olivia's excerpt highlighted that the students usually worked on their emotions and feelings but not on evidence. Moreover, based on Lucas's excerpt, the interns seemed to follow their mentor's request tightly even though the request was not appropriate. In the Vietnamese context, employees are often afraid of being clumsy or failing to satisfy others, especially their superiors (Tran, 2013). Accordingly, Vietnamese employees rarely say "No" to their superiors' requests. That might be why the students accepted their mentor's request.

#### *G. Lack of Devotion*

Due to the nature of an industrial practicum, the students were perceived to lack devotion and sacrifice for their jobs. That was what Charlotte and Olivier said as follows,

The practicum would be over in a short period, and the students would not be our full-time employees. They were aware of these facts. Therefore, they did not work with all their potential and efforts. What a pity! It was a good chance for them to show everything they have.... (Charlotte).

The students did not want to make full efforts to complete their work because they were not full-time employees. It was definitely wrong perception... (Olivier).

Like the explanations of the students' lack of problem-solving skills, the students might overlook the impact of the industrial practicum on their future. Instead of showing good attitudes toward the chance of experiencing a real-world setting in the practicum, some students refused to sacrifice themselves for their current job as they perceived not to stick with the company in the future. However, the wrong perception would cause several circumstances in their social development. For instance, the current employers and those in their dream workplaces are in a good relationship, and the bad impressions during the practicum on the students could cause some disadvantages in their future job applications. The first impression is essential for seeking a chance in life (Yamamura et al., 2010). Compared to those obtaining good impressions from trustworthy people, future employers may have a wrong first impression of those failing to display a good image during the practicum. Accordingly, they have no reason to consider recruiting those students.

#### *H. Lack of Specialized Skills/ Identities*

Interestingly, the employers remarked on the students' lack of identities or specialized skills while comparing the English-major students to other students who learned other majors, such as business, information, and technology communication, or the like. Amelia and Liam stated,

Compared to other majors students, the English-major ones were most unqualified for the real-world settings. The main reason was their lack of specialized skills. English is just a tool, not a specialized skill. The English-major students needed more skills to work in a real-world setting... They absolutely lacked job-related identities (Amelia).

After the practicum, I could not find a convincing reason to recruit English-major students as full-time employees in my company. It is accurate to say that their English was better than that of others. However, language is not the only requirement for a good employee. The students learning other majors outperformed the English-major ones in essential technical skills, such as computing or entrepreneurship skills.... (Liam).

The results were in line with the study by Pham (2021), which indicated that most universities in Vietnam have failed to provide sufficient professional knowledge and work-related skills for English-major graduates in this context. Regarding the belief that graduates with sufficient English can only compete with others, the imbalance between theoretical and practical components in the curriculum design of the program may prevent the English-major students from succeeding in their practicum and future jobs.

### V. IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings of this current study, some following practical implications are suggested to help develop English-major students' employability skills. First and foremost, the rapid development of technology has brought many advantages to human lives, especially education. However, raising students' awareness of its negative impact on their communication skills is essential if they only focus on using communication devices but reject face-to-face interactions with others. Sufficient workshops on these issues must be organized with the participation of the students and their guardians, such as their parents or relatives. The connection between school and home may help increase students' awareness of these issues more profoundly than in the current period. Besides, in these workshops, it is necessary to help improve students' practical laboratory knowledge and skills. As a result, they can efficiently self-explore the information needed for their assigned tasks.

Next, education and training should be designed to meet social requirements. In other words, during their time at university, English-major students need more practical experiences to understand their strengths and weaknesses and develop themselves. To do so, one practicum seems to be insufficient for the students. Accordingly, intensifying the chances for the students to experience different jobs in different real-world workplaces will help them better understand themselves. The length of the practicum is also essential for the students to understand the organizational culture of their practicum units. Besides, the academic workforce in the university needs to be aware of their role in their student's development of employability skills. Teaching is expected to make a positive correlation with practical experiences in real-world settings. Academics must be aware of society's requirements for their students. They will design appropriate activities to help increase students' knowledge and skills for future jobs.

Students' transition from Gen Y to Gen Z is a big concern for this era. Accordingly, educators, policymakers, and employers must understand the new generation's unique characteristics to maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. For that, these people must communicate with and learn more about this community. It is expected that the more they talk to the new generation, the better they provide this community of the new world owners with sound advice and sufficient training on their employability skills. Consequently, a win-win relationship will be established. The employers have a high-quality workforce with sufficient employability skills, and the Gen Z-ers have a good world to live in and develop.

### VI. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted qualitatively with three focus-group interviews to collect data from fifteen employers about their perspectives of what English-major students needed to improve based on their observations in the students'

practicum. The results showed that the students lacked many skills and attributes to become successful employees in the 21st century, such as communication, information retrieval, handling, planning, problem-solving, teamwork, self-confidence, critical thinking, devotion, and specialized skills/ identities. The employers' reports contributed to enriching the literature and suggested having some practical implications for supporting English-major students to have sufficient employability skills.

## VII. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The number of participants in this current study was small; therefore, this study could not generalize the results. Besides, looking at the employers' perspectives only did not provide the study with a profound understanding of the issues related to the implementation of the curriculum. Further studies should intensify and vary their participants. In other words, researchers should listen to a more significant number of employers, graduates, university lecturers, and human resource managers. It is also worth exploring what kinds of practicum units provide their interns more benefits during the industrial practicum. Besides, the challenges that graduates encounter during practicum should be more well-presented in future research.

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**Yen H. Phuong** is currently an associate professor at the School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, Vietnam. She carries studies on language teaching approaches, students' learning autonomy, self-regulated learning strategies and teachers' professional development. She published articles in different journals and is the editor of one book on formative assessment in language teaching.

**Thao T. Le** is a lecturer teaching language skill courses at Can Tho University, Vietnam. Thao is very interested in classroom-based research and educational change-related issues.

**Thuy P. Ho** is currently a senior lecturer teaching American – English literature at Can Tho University. She is keen on studies related to linguistics, literature, and cultural issues.

**Nhan T. Do** is currently a lecturer at Can Tho university. He has been teaching for 9 years. His research focuses on linguistics and how to apply language teaching methods in real contexts for better practices. In the years to come, he hopes to publish more linguistically related articles.

**Thuy T. Pham** obtained her master's degree in 2019. Then, she worked as an adjunct lecturer at different universities in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. From 2021 to now, she became an official lecturer teaching translation and interpretation at Nam Can Tho University. She is interested in studies on teacher professional development activities.