



Doctor of Education: Higher Education

Students' Pre and Post-Graduation Perceptions of Career Readiness in College
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Executive Summary: July 22, 2020

Introduction: The purpose of this study was to determine if, at a regional public university in the Northeast, there were significant differences between participants' pre- and post-graduation perceptions of their career readiness prior to graduation.

Problem of Practice: The problem of practice is that many students perceive they are graduating with a high degree of competency in the knowledge and skills employers desire. However, many employers do not perceive graduates to be as career ready as graduates believe themselves to be, and individuals often overestimate their abilities before they are competent enough with a skill to accurately assess their ability.

Research Method: Using a within-subjects group differences approach, this quantitative study tested for significance and direction of differences between college graduates' pre- and post-graduation perceptions of their competency with 12 employment skills prior to graduation. Ordinal data from participants' scores were paired within-subjects, and the Wilcoxon matched-pair signed-rank test was used to assess whether their signed ranks differed. Differences were also tested based on graduation date and employment status.

Summary of Findings: There was a statistically significant decrease in how interculturally competent participants perceived themselves to have been prior to graduation ($n = 52$, $z = -2.483$, $p = .013$). This difference was also observed among spring graduates ($n = 45$, $z = -2.013$, $p = .044$) and employed graduates ($n = 28$, $z = -1.977$, $p = .048$); however, when employed graduates were excluded from the sample, this difference was not observed. No other significant differences were observed with skills.

Limitation(s) of Study: The study does not allow for generalization of findings, as it was conducted at a single university in the Northeast, with a sample size of 52 participants. The homogeneity of responses also limited the ability for stratification into sub-groups based on graduation date and employment status.

Implications/Significance of Study: Graduates may be overestimating their intercultural competency before they are competent enough with the skill to accurately assess their ability. Future studies should focus on identifying if this can be replicated at other universities and identifying potential causes and ways to better understand and address the discrepancy.