Boosting Graduate Employability: Bridging the Cognitive and Affective Domains

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Australian universities and select businesses recently struck an alliance to boost graduate employability, a milestone in Work Integrated Learning (WIL). However, teaching for WIL competency is largely directed at delivering appropriate discipline knowledge and practical abilities based mainly on cognitive skills with little emphasis on the affective domain including emotional skills, a requisite in the workplace. This study looks at empirical evidence of work-readiness of WIL students through their learning experiences and their understanding of the cognitive domain as well as the affective domain. The research is based on a validated employability framework, the Work Skills Development framework (Bandaranaike & Willison, 2009), which was used to assess core employability competencies and performance levels of 138 multidisciplinary WIL students and gain feedback from 111 employers. Statistical analysis was used to compare variations in the application of cognitive and affective skills and tested across gender, age, discipline and previous work experience. The study concluded that overall among students there was a limited understanding of the affective domain. However, the employers’ emphasis was on improving student emotional skills. Therefore, to unlock the potential of the cognitive skills and for a deeper understanding of emotional skills by students, the concept of *Emotional Work-readiness* [EW] is introduced in this study.

Key Words: Cognitive domain, Affective domain, Emotional Intelligence, Work Integrated Learning