Key Career Success Factors for Liberal Arts Graduates: Soft Skills Matter

Part 1: Key Career Success Factors for Liberal Arts Majors in South Korea - Research Study
Sungsik Ahn, Korea University

Part 2: Soft Skills Matter - Literature Review
Danita Redd, Moorpark College, Professor
Dr. Lisa Raufman, El Camino College, Professor Emeritus

Table of Contents
- Introduction of Research Team
- Struggling Liberal Arts (Humanities) Students
- How We Conducted Research
- What We Found
- How Can We Help Liberal Arts Students and Graduates?

Part 1: Research

Career Success Factors for Liberal Arts Graduates in Korea
Sungsik Ahn
Career Development Center
Korea University

APCDA Conference | 2015.9.16
Research Team

- Participants and Instructors of Career Development Facilitator Training in South Korea
- After the CDF training, we prioritized career issues in South Korea while considering our interest
- No compensation, entirely volunteer work for the researchers and participants

Struggling Liberal Arts (Humanities) Students

THE NEED AND PURPOSE OF OUR STUDY

Why Liberal Arts?

- In Korea, the college entrance rate has been high
- College graduates’ employment rate declines
- Liberal Arts graduates’ employment rate falls into a lower group (45.5%)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfjM5w-gNt8

College Entrance Rate

Source: Korean Educational Statistics Service (http://kess.kedi.re.kr/index)
Employment Rates of Undergraduates

Source: National Statistical Office of Korea

Korean Government’s New Initiatives

- Support for early decision-making of undergraduates
- Support for expanding career paths for liberal arts majors
- Support universities for early interventions starting from freshmen

Why are Liberal Arts Graduates Unemployed?

1) Higher rate of university entrance
2) Short-term career decision: university first, major later
3) Choosing a Liberal Arts major considering interest and acceptability, without exploring the world of work
4) The challenging economic situation: reduction of youth employment
5) The positions that were typically for liberal arts are getting filled with majors with a professional focus (international trade, financial/banking, etc.)

Purpose of Study

- To identify helping and hindering factors, as well as wish list items for the successful career development of liberal arts students and graduates.
How We Conducted Research
THE METHODS OF OUR STUDY

How We Conducted Interviews

- Enhanced Critical Incident Technique (ECIT)
  - Helpful and hindering factors
  - Wish-list factors
- Incidents include antecedent information, detailed description of experiences, descriptions of the outcomes

Whom We Interviewed (Participants)

- Inclusion criteria
  - Liberal arts majors (1st major)
  - More than 2 years experience
  - Higher level of job commitment: above 3.3 out of 5.0
  - Higher level of job satisfaction: above 3.7 out of 5.0
  - Currently employed

How Data is Collected

- A screening survey (12 of 17 met the inclusion criteria; 70%)
- Informed consent
- Primary Interview 60-90 minutes
- In-depth, semi-structured & open-ended with clarifying questions
- 12 interviews, by telephone, web conferencing, and in-person
- Audio/Video recorded with handwritten notes
How the Data is Analyzed and Validated (in progress)

- Internal validation while interviewing
- Audiotaping & transcription
- Experts to review transcripts
- Exhaustiveness
- Independent extraction, by one researcher
- Independent category formation, by two researchers
- Checking with participants
- Focusing on primary categories
- Determination of practical use of categories by an expert
- Comparison with literature

Whom we Interviewed (Demographic information of participants)

- **Major**: Language 7(English 4, Italian 1, Japanese 1, Korean 1), Psychology 2, History 1, Philosophy 1, Public Admin 1
- **Sex**: Male 4, Female 8
- **Age**: range 31-49, average 35.2 years old
- **Career experience**: range 2-22 years, average 9.0 years
- **Job Commitment**: range 3.3-4.7, average 3.8
- **Job Satisfaction**: range 3.7-5.0, average 4.2

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<th>No.</th>
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<th>2nd Major</th>
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## Categories of Helping Factors

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## Categories of Hindering Factors

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<td>4. Prejudice about Liberal Arts Graduates</td>
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## Categories of Wish-list Factors

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<td>8. Understanding Financial Statements</td>
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<td>9. Diverse Experience</td>
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<td>14. Dating</td>
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<td>15. Fluent in both English and Chinese</td>
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## How Can We Help Liberal Arts Students and Graduates?

**Suggestions**

**Limitations**

**Future Recommendations**
How can we help liberal arts students and graduates?

Discussion

Limitations

- Participants do not represent all areas of liberal arts majors.
- Participants do not represent all levels or types of universities.
- Cannot be generalized to all liberal arts graduates in Korea or other contexts.
- A preliminary study requiring further validation check.

Future Recommendation

- Implement a full validation check following the ECIT guidelines.
- Conduct a quantitative study for a triangulation and validation purpose.
- Develop career interventions that can enhance the helping factors and minimize the hindering factors.

Let's review two of the previous slides:
Part 2: Soft Skills Matter

Soft Skills Matter - Literature Review

Danita Redd, Moorpark College, Professor
Dr. Lisa Raufman, El Camino College, Professor Emeritus

Let's look at research from UC Berkeley: English & Art Majors


Hindering Factors

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Employment Rates of Undergraduates

Source: National Statistical Office of Korea
Soft Skills Matter: Liberal Arts, Business, STEM, ...All Majors!

Soft Skills:
Personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people in the workforce. All employers identify them as needed skills for all workers.

Soft Skills Matter!
These USA Entities are Leaders in Identifying Soft Skills of the Future:

- Institute for the Future (IFTF)
- Brazen Careerist
- Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)

Soft Skills...
...are why any major would send your students and clients down the Path of Success!

Soft Skills - 2020 & Beyond...

#1 Sense-Making:
ability to determine the deeper meaning or significance of what is being expressed.
#2 **Social Intelligence**: (deep emotional intelligence)
ability to connect to others in a deep & direct way, to sense & stimulate reactions & desired interactions

#3 **Novel & Adaptive Thinking**: (Creative Critical Thinking)
proficiency at thinking & coming up with solutions & responses beyond that which is rote or rule based

#4 **Cross-Cultural Competency**:
ability to operate in different cultural settings

#5 **Computational Thinking**: (Math, Data, Statistics)
ability to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts & to understand data-based reasoning
#6 **Cognitive Load Management**:
(creative project planning)
ability to discriminate & filter information for importance, & to understand how to maximize cognitive functioning using a variety of tools & techniques

#7 **New-Media Literacy**:
ability to critically assess & develop content that uses new media forms, & to leverage these media for persuasive communication

#8 **Transdisciplinarity**:
(Companion Disciplines/Cross Disciplines)
literacy in & ability to understand concepts across multiple disciplines

#9 **Design Mindset**:
(organize ones work for creative outcomes)
ability to represent & develop tasks & work processes for desired outcomes
Soft Skills – 2020 & Beyond…!

#10 Virtual Collaboration: ability to work productively, drive engagement, & demonstrate presence as a member of a virtual team

Check out the Brazen Careerist: http://www.brazencareerist.com/company

Last Thoughts Based on Years of Observation

- Planned Happenstance
- Study seriously & in depth at least one culture and foreign language other than the one of birth.
- Practice: Courage, Fairness, Empathy, Compassion (Covey)
- Realize the Value of Liberal Arts Education!

Read: In Defense of a Liberal Education by Fareed Zakaria

Why we do what we do! Career Development provides opportunities for all people worldwide it bridges socioeconomic gaps & can bring a better quality of life to families & communities.

Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.

- Nelson Mandela

Thank you

Q & A