

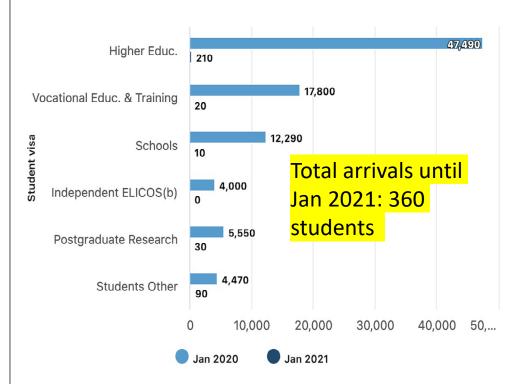
# Three key points of today's presentation:

- 1. What have we known about research on in't graduates' employability?
- 2. How has my research filled gaps in the literature?
- 3. What are implications for policies and practices?

# 1. What have we known about research on in't graduates' employability?



#### 12.1 Arrivals - International Students(a), Australia



<sup>(</sup>a) International student visa holders whether it be for a short-term (less than 1 year) or long-term (1 year) duration.

#### Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/tourism-and-transport/overseas-arrivals-and-departures-australia/latest-release#arrivals-international-students



Table 2: Enrolments on one day, sorted by end date of the course and sector, 2019 & 2020

15 November 2019			15 November 2020			
Scheduled end date (by sector)	Enrolments	Proportion by sector	Scheduled end date (by sector)	Enrolments	Proportion by sector	Change in 2020
2020 or later	466,043	100%	2021 or later	398,982	100%	-14%
Higher Education	280,334	60%	Higher Education	241,570	61%	-14%
VET	131,960	28%	VET	131,713	33%	0%
Schools	12,183	3%	Schools	10,428	3%	-14%
ELICOS	30,260	6%	ELICOS	10,025	3%	-67%
Non-Award	11,306	2%	Non-Award	5,246	1%	-54%
Prior to 2020	120,681		Prior to 2021	103,220		-14%
Total	586,724		Total	502,202		-14%

How student numbers will develop after 1 January 2021 is unclear at this time. It will depend on the propensity of students outside Australia to commence new courses and the pace at which international students may be able to enter Australia as the year progresses.

Source: Department of Education, Skills and Employment <a href="https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-snapshots/Documents/RS">https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-research-snapshots/Documents/RS</a> 2021ReturningStudents.pdf

This is not the same as when a traveller self reports 'education' as their main reason for journey.

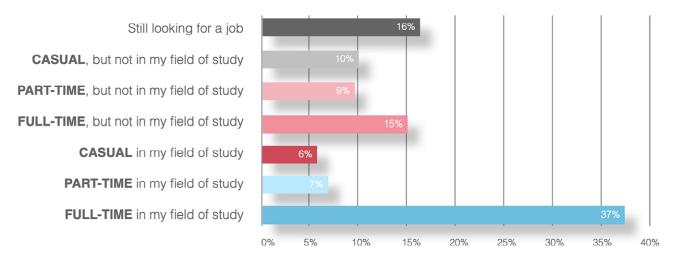
<sup>(</sup>b) English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Australia January 2021

### **Employability outcomes**

What we have known ...

FIGURE 2 Current employment status of onshore respondents



Tran, L. (2018)

High unemployment rate compared to Australia's national unemployment rate (10.6% and 5.7%, respectively) and a large number worked either part-time or in low-skilled occupations (30% and 17%, respectively) (ACTEID, 2019).

High % (29.6%) went back to studying (Department of Home Affairs, 2018)

What we haven't known enough...

Employability outcomes: Employment obtainment, satisfaction, personal growth and sustainability (Clarke, 2018; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020; Pham, 2020)

Migrants' post-study career as staggered/spacial trajectories (Robertson, 2019; Tan & Hugo, 2017)

Various surveys commonly declare 60-80% intend to work in the host country after graduation but long-term stay rates generally range from 15-25% in OECD members (OECD, 2011).

## The types of research

What we have known ...

A range of 'problems' including insufficient English proficiency, limited work experiences and employers' stereotypes (Pham et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2019)



Impacts of human capital and external factors

What we haven't known enough...

- 1. What kind of resources do in't graduates possess? How useful are these resources for their work transitions and sustainability?
- 2. How do they strategize their resources (use agency) to navigate barriers in the labour markets?



- Employability is determined by a range of external and internal factors (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005; Pham & Jackson, 2020; Tran et al., 2021).
- Recently, individuals' responsibilities have become important due to severe competition in the labour market (Bennett, 2018; Clarke, 2018; Tomlinson, 2017).



### **Theoretical lenses**

What we have known ...

- Largely deployed human capital theory
- Largely took a deficit view: changes or adaptation, inferior & superior

### Bourdieu's cultural theory:

- Reproduce cultural capital
- Disadvantaged groups have agency and treasures but constrained within the structure/system due to limited power
- Ignore the subjectivity of individuals and various discourses that can shape one's decision-making in the bargaining process



What we haven't known enough ...

- Critical and sociological perspectives (e.g., Brown et al., 2004; Marginson, 2014; Holmes, 2013; Tholen, 2015; Tomlinson, 2017)
- Self-formation (Marginson, 2014)
- Agency: Life-course agency (Hitlin & Elder, 2007), needs-response agency and agency for becoming (Hopwood, 2010; Tran & Vu, 2017), agentic capital (Pham & Jackson, 2020; Pham, 2020)
- Sen's Capability approach
- Critical race theory

Life/studies/career result from a range of forms of capital including human, social, cultural, identity, psychological and agentic.

# 2. How has my research filled gaps in the literature?



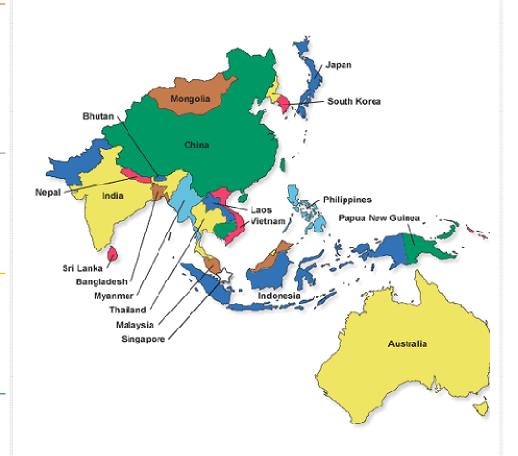
### My research for the last few years

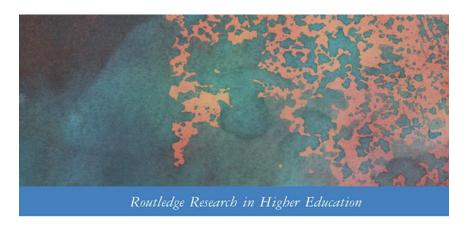
**Purpose:** I have done several research studies on employability negotiation of in't graduates who stayed in Australia and returned to their home countries like Vietnam, China, Singapore and Japan.

**Sample size**: Depends on the projects (from 30 for qualitative to 200 for mixed-method)

**Theoretical frameworks:** Bourdieu, Tomlinson's graduate capital model, Marginson's self-formation, Pham's agentic capital

**Outcomes:** Develop two teaching units/courses about employability in Faculty of Education, Monash University

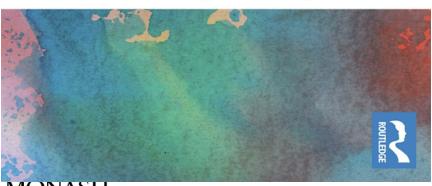


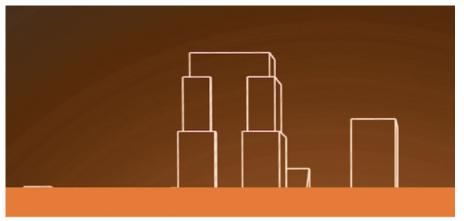


# DEVELOPING AND UTILIZING EMPLOYABILITY CAPITALS

GRADUATES' STRATEGIES ACROSS LABOUR
MARKETS

Edited by
Tran Le Huu Nghia, Thanh Pham,
Michael Tomlinson, Karen Medica
and Christopher D. Thompson

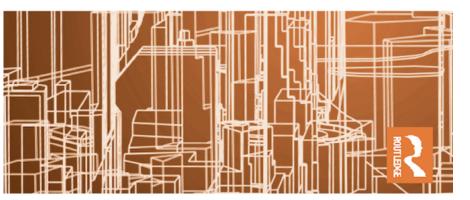




# ENHANCING STUDENT EDUCATION TRANSITIONS AND EMPLOYABILITY

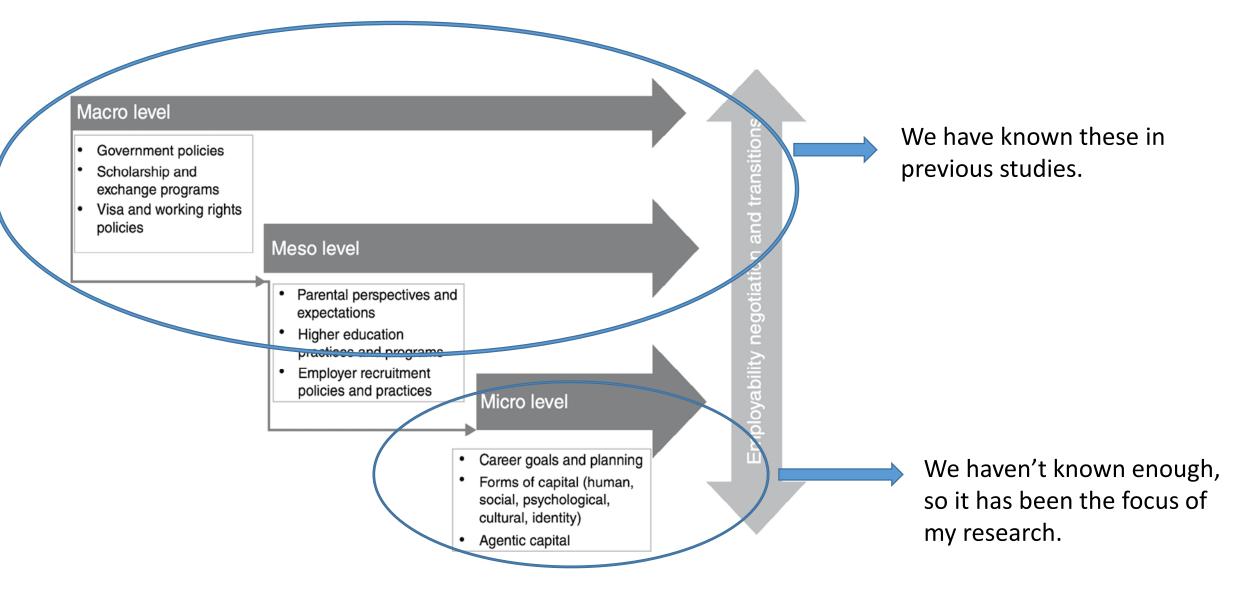
FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Thanh Pham and Behnam Soltani



Please see articles on the reference list.

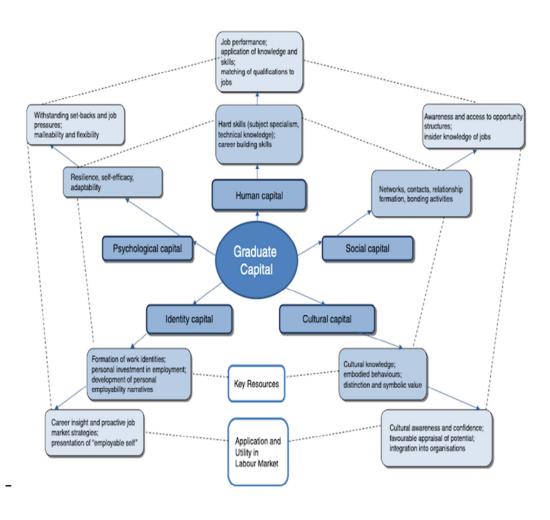




Pham & Jackson (2020)



### Capitals (human, social, cultural, identity, psychological, agentic)



Tomlinson, M. (2017)

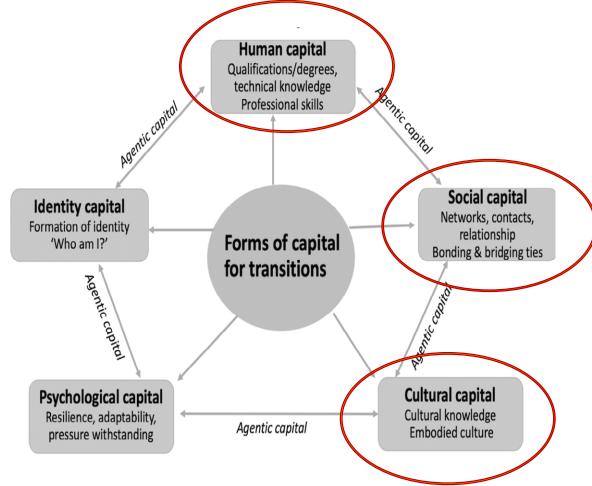


Figure 2.1. Capitals-based approach

Pham, T. (2021a)

### Human capital: Qualifications & Professional skills

### **Qualifications:**

Still important but were appreciated differently in different disciplines and different contexts

### In't graduates in Australia

Enabled the graduates to obtain skilled occupations and promotion and mobilize

Note: Some evidence about 'nationally-based protectionism' (Bauder, 2003): Certain types of job were prioritized for local graduates e.g., lawyer, teaching at the early schooling levels because these jobs required local knowledge and standard accents (so for Westerners in English-speaking countries).

#### Returnees

Degrees in high-demand jobs like IT, business, leadership, management

Note: Qualifications obtained in different countries were appreciated differently – for example, in Vietnam US and UK qualifications were more favoured (Pham & Saito, 2019).

## Human capital: Qualifications & Professional skills

### **Professional skills:**

Crucially important in Australia and also in home countries

### In't graduates in Australia

Limitations in a range of professional skills, especially communication skills

"I was shortlisted for several interviews but failed all of them ... When they looked at my CV, they might have been very impressed, but when we met for face-to-face interviews, they became aware of al., 2019)

### Returnees

Professional skills are strengths. In fact, many used professional skills to make them look more advantaged when seeking for jobs.

"After going through several jobs, I noticed what helped me and was preferred by my supervisors was how to show you as a full-rounded person who could work in a community . . . When I recruit new staff, I'm more interested in my English [deficiencies]". (Pham et how they see themselves as a member in a team and how they build a teamwork culture". (Pham & Saito, 2019)

# Human capital: Qualifications & Professional skills

Table 6 Participants' views on the factors that contributed to workplace effectiveness and productivity

No	Items	MD	SD
1	Had good specialisations	3.31	1.02
2	Understood the working culture (e.g. rules, conduct)	4.05	1.08
3	Had good personal qualities (e.g. persistent, resilient, reliable, responsible)	3.56	1.09
4	Had good professional skills (e.g. communication, teamwork, independent, confident)	4.25	1.08

Note: Strongly disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Undecided = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly agree = 5.

Pham, T. (2020): Returnees

**Table IV** The importance of each factor below to the success in obtaining your job(s)

Factors	MD	SD
Have sufficient English proficiency	4.45	.84
Know expectations and culture of industries	4.30	.88
Have working experience	3.72	.90
Have a good academic record	3.11	.95

Table V The importance of each element below in performing work effectively

Items	MD	SD
Understand the working culture (e.g., rules, conduct)	4.65	.78
Have good personal qualities (e.g., persistent, resilient, reliable, responsible)	4.45	.76
Have good professional skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, independent, confident)	4.45	.86

## What are implications?

International education has been viewed as a tool for return on investment (ROI), and qualification(s) are still perceived as the only tool(s) that will enhance ROI. In't students are, therefore, focused on obtaining a good academic record and tend to devalue the preparation of other resources including professional skills.

- For in't students: Rebalance academic performance and professional skills; Be guided to build professional skills as early as possible in and beyond formal curricula
- For institutions: Develop better connections between the worlds inside and outside university by using authentic teaching, learning and assessment tasks

#### For my teaching at Monash:

 Use a range of small assessment pieces throughout the semester to assess different professional skills e.g., oral, written, teamwork, self-reflection, creativity, analyze job advertisement against what being taught etc.

# Communication skills:

- Linguistic skills
- 'Legitimate language'

Pham, 2021 (under review)

- Lots of research has explored linguistic skills/English proficiency
- 'Legitimate language' = "the social capacity to use the linguistic capacity adequately in a determinate situation" (Bourdieu,1992, cited in Cederberg 2015, p. 41).
  - Divulged a sense of difficulty in obtaining the right knowledge and sensitivity to cultural differences to develop natural and smooth conversations in the workplace.
  - Some failed to join small talk to build working relationships not necessarily due to limited English proficiencies but more about 'ways of doing things'.

"I don't know what I should talk about ... They talk about walking the dog, surfing, and doing barbecues. Then, they think my English is not good enough".

# Strategies to overcome communication limitations

**Type 1:** Enhance *expected* communication skills Used different ways to identify preferences, values and norms in daily practices and at the workplace

"I learned from the marketing manager's Facebook that she had a dog and loved talking about her dog, so when I greeted her, I didn't simply say 'Hi' but extended [the greeting] by asking about her dog. Then we talked about the dog, then other stuff. The more we talked, the more I knew about her and learned tips useful for my work".

# Strategies to overcome communication limitations

### Type 2: Use ethnic capital as navigation strategies

- Actively involved in self-analysis and use co-ethnic networks to find career pathways that matched their communication competencies
- Avoided professions that required lots of direct oral communication and chose professions that required more expertise/specializations like finance, IT and research fellowship. A number found part-time work and later jobs in these areas in their own communities.



- Migrants' capital tends to be devalued, but, in many cases, they could prevent this devaluation by seeking a space to use their capital as an advantage (Bauder, 2006; Collins, 2014).
- The graduates actively negotiated between their qualities and structural barriers to find opportunities that matched their 'labour-market' persona (skills, abilities, interests, experiences, and choices) (Tholen, 2015, p.774).

# Strategies to overcome communication limitations

# **Type 3:** Going *beyond structural barriers* as a navigation strategy

Did not make efforts to either enhance expected communication competencies or use their ethnic capital because they did not feel a need:

- Career was not their priority (women following their husband).
- Australia was just a 'stop-over' destination for study and temporary work while waiting for arrangements to move to a new country. They did not perceive having a stable life and a good job meant 'success'.
  - Being pulled between 'cultural flexibility' on the one hand and 'cultural uncertainty and confusion' on the other (Rizvi, 2009, p. 261)
  - In't graduates have different types of resources, goals, and interests that can shape who they want to become (Marginson, 2014); employability cannot be separated from individual subjects and reduced to 'the singular abstract logic of an institutional or economic model' (Tholen, 2015, p.781).

### What are implications?

- Communication skills for employability must be understood as a wide range of competencies, including linguistic or grammatical, discourse, actional, sociocultural, and strategic, so need to be articulated in the context.
- Problems do not often come from limited linguistic skills but their unfamiliarity with what Puwar (2001) called 'subtle codes' (e.g., norms, values, behaviours, and identities), so unable to speak in a 'normal' and 'acceptable' manner in a particular social context.

- Design authentic teaching, learning and assessment practices in context
- Creating comfortable contexts is crucially important, especially in interviews and workplace.

A challenge for online teaching & learning

"When I was offered an interview, they suggested [that we] do the online interview, but I requested a face-to-face interview because I often felt more nervous when talking online. I don't know, but when I met [the] people, I saw their faces and their behaviours, and all of this made me more relaxed, and I could present myself better".

### · · · · · · · · · · ·

## Social capital

 Table 4 Participants' responses to the question 'How did you find your first job?'

No	Tools	Percentages
1	Used employment agents	13%
2	Returned to previous organisation	30%
3	Social networks (e.g. introductions by friends, peers, family members, supervisors, academics)	39%
4	Used advertisements on industries' websites and newspapers	15%
5	Introduction of stakeholders in the host country (e.g. institution, industry)	3%

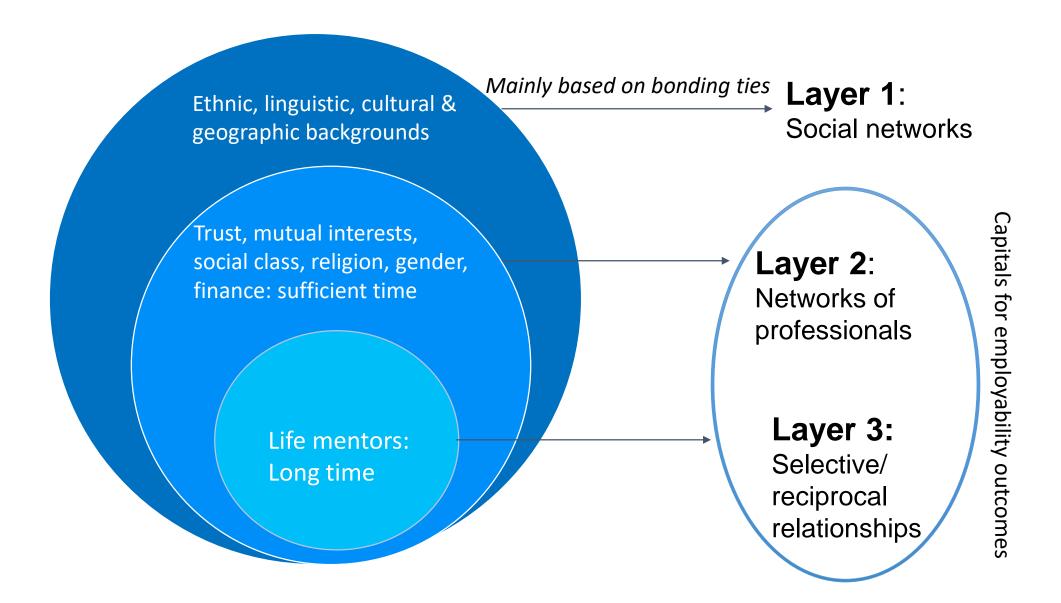
Table 1 How did you find your first job?

Pham, T. (2020): Returnees

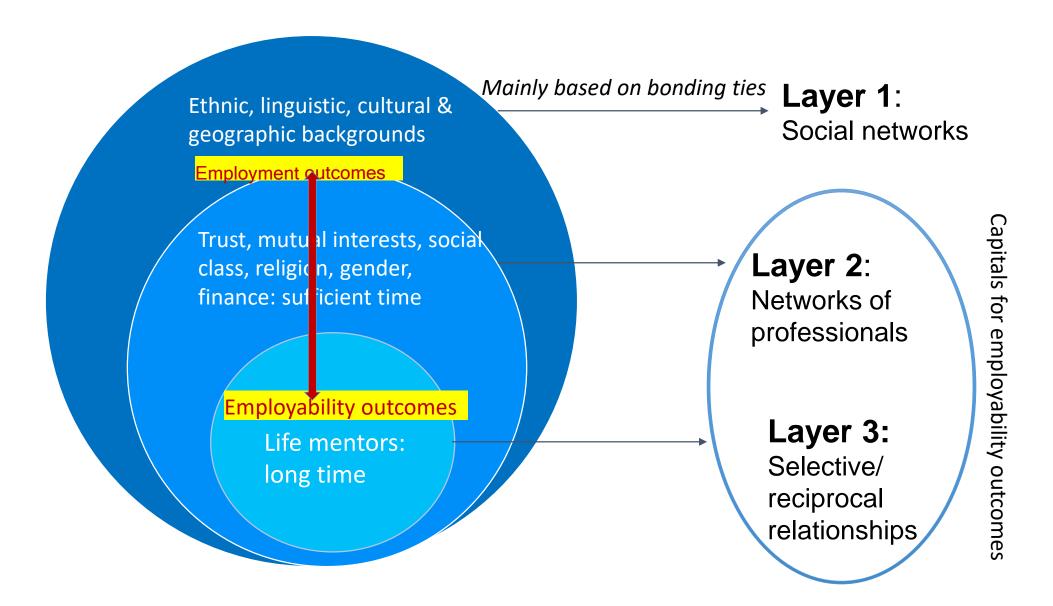
Tools	Percentages
Advertisement on employment agents	33%
Social networks (e.g., introduction of friends, peers, family members,	30%
supervisors, academics)	
Advertisement on the company's website	20%
Advertisement at the university	17%

Pham, T. (2021, under review): In't graduates in Australia

## Social networks vs. Social capital



### Social networks vs. Social capital



## What are implications?

- Social networks/capital have been explored but little has been known about the differences between different types of social networks.
- Social capital is a deeper level of social networks and takes longer time to be built and often based on 'trust' and mutual interest.

- Create opportunities for students to have sufficient time to build trust & mutual interest, especially with industries on internships
- Guide students to develop career goals so that they could have enough time to seek and build social capital i.e., important for returnees to keep connections with the home country.

#### For my teaching at Monash:

- Reflect on their social networks to identify which ones are bonding and bridging and their advantages/disadvantages
- Self-analyze what contributes to negative/positive relationships with mentors/colleagues on internships
- Create LinkedIn account to seek and connect with people/ organizations in their occupation field

# What is agentic capital?

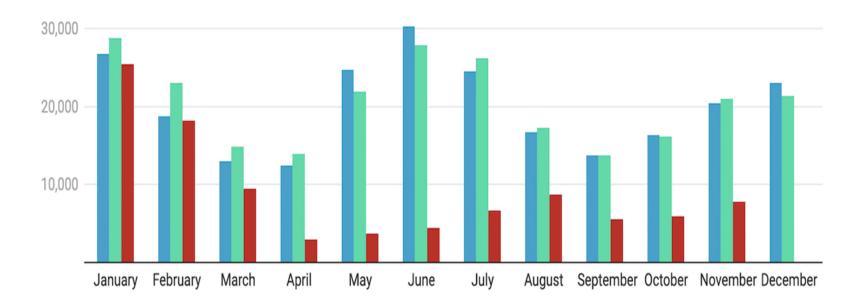
Pham and Jackson (2020) found that articulating these forms of capital was not sufficient. To obtain optimal outcomes in the employability negotiation process, graduates need to develop 'agentic capital' that is the capacity to develop strategies to use various forms of capital effectively and strategically depending on one's ethnic background, areas of expertise, career plans, contexts, and personal qualities. More specifically, the authors defined 'agentic capital' as the capacity to interlink various of capital, highlight strengths, cover weaknesses, and visualise one's short- and long-term goals of career development.

Pham, T., & Jackson, D. (2020); Pham, T. (2020)

# Visa approvals have fallen but international students are still applying to study in Australia

Primary international student visas granted (excluding those whose last visa held was a student visa)





Source: DHA • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

In November 2020, visa approvals were around 38% what they were the year before — a drop of 62%.

still There are significant number of applications and approvals in the current environment testament to Australia how remains an attractive prospect for many international students.



Source: <a href="https://theconversation.com/2021-is-the-year-australias-international-student-crisis-really-bites-153180">https://theconversation.com/2021-is-the-year-australias-international-student-crisis-really-bites-153180</a>

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# THANK YOU

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