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Assessment Strategies of Art and Design Curricula in Enhancing Employability Skills among University Students of Kyambogo University, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examined the relationship between formative and summative assessment practices and employability skills among undergraduate Art and Design students at Kyambogo University.

Methodology: A quantitative approach and correlational research design were used. Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire from 378 students. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and multiple regression were used to analyse the data. **Findings:** Formative assessment ($r = .329$, $p < .001$) and summative assessment ($r = .262$, $p < .001$) were positively and significantly correlated with employability skills. The regression model was statistically significant, $F = 28.921$, $p < .001$, and explained 13.4% of the variance in employability skills ($R^2 = .134$; adjusted $R^2 = .129$). Formative assessment ($\beta = .271$, $p < .001$) and summative assessment ($\beta = .170$, $p = .001$) were both significant positive predictors, with formative assessment showing the stronger association. Conclusion: Both formative and summative assessment are associated with employability skills, particularly when formative assessment provides regular feedback, reflection, and opportunities for peer and self-assessment, and summative tasks require students to demonstrate competencies in authentic, professionally relevant contexts.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Lecturers should strengthen continuous, learner-centred formative assessment, while the School of Art and Industrial Design should expand authentic, practical, and industry-oriented summative assessment.

Key words: *Assessment, Employability, Formative, Skills, Summative*

JEL Codes: I21, I23, J24

INTRODUCTION

Quality higher education is fundamental to sustainable development because it equips graduates with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to contribute effectively to economic growth and societal transformation (Uleanya & Yassim, 2025). Beyond disciplinary knowledge, universities are increasingly expected to produce graduates who possess employability skills that enable them to obtain, maintain, and progress in employment while adapting to rapidly changing workplace demands (Krijgsheld et al., 2024). Consequently, governments, employers, and higher education institutions continue to advocate curriculum reforms that strengthen graduates' employability and improve their transition from university to the labour market. Employability skills refer to the transferable knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal attributes that enable graduates to perform effectively in diverse workplace environments. These skills include lifelong learning, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership, adaptability, and digital competencies (Mejías-Acosta et al., 2024). Collectively, these competencies enable graduates to work collaboratively, communicate effectively, solve workplace problems, embrace technological innovations, and respond positively to organizational and environmental change. As labour markets become increasingly knowledge-based and technology-driven, employers continue to place greater emphasis on these transferable competencies than on technical knowledge alone (Guo & Asmawi, 2024).

The concept of employability has evolved considerably over the past three decades. Earlier perspectives viewed employability largely as the ability to secure employment after graduation. However, contemporary perspectives conceptualize employability as a broader set of achievements comprising knowledge, skills, personal attributes, and professional dispositions that enhance graduates' capacity to gain employment and succeed throughout their careers. This shift reflects changing labour market expectations, technological advancement, globalization, and the increasing demand for graduates who can continuously learn, innovate, collaborate, and adapt to complex workplace environments (Rodríguez-Rojas et al., 2024). Despite substantial investments in higher education, concerns regarding graduates' employability skills continue to attract global attention. Employers across many countries increasingly report that university graduates possess adequate academic qualifications but often demonstrate deficiencies in communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership, adaptability, and digital competencies. These deficiencies have contributed to graduate unemployment, underemployment, and prolonged school-to-work transitions despite increasing levels of educational attainment (Guo & Asmawi, 2024; Krijgsheld et al., 2024). Consequently, improving graduates' employability skills has become a major priority for higher education institutions worldwide.

The challenge is particularly evident in developing countries, where universities continue to experience pressure to produce graduates capable of responding to rapidly evolving labour market demands. In Uganda, higher education institutions have undertaken curriculum reforms aimed at promoting competency-based learning and producing graduates with workplace-relevant

competencies in line with the quality assurance and graduate employability agenda advanced by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE, 2023). Consistent with this agenda, Kyambogo University (2024) reviewed its Art and Design curricula to strengthen practical training, industrial attachment, school practice, and other experiential learning approaches intended to enhance graduate employability. Despite these efforts, recent evidence indicates that employability challenges persist. For instance, Musiime (2023) reported that graduates of the Margaret Trowell School of Industrial and Fine Art at Makerere University experienced difficulties in securing stable employment, with many employed in occupations unrelated to their areas of specialization. However, empirical evidence on the effectiveness of university curricula in developing employability skills in Uganda remains scanty. The few available studies have largely examined graduate employability and curriculum implementation in higher education generally rather than within Art and Design programmes specifically (Nakimuli et al., 2023; Geera & Onen, 2024; Nuwabimpa, 2024; Arinaitwe & Ngobi, 2025; Nakayiso, 2025; Okaka et al., 2025). Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence on how curriculum implementation components, particularly instructional strategies and assessment practices, contribute to the development of employability skills among Art and Design students in Uganda. This gap necessitated the present study, which examined the effectiveness of the Art and Design curriculum in enhancing employability skills among university students at Kyambogo University.

Among the curriculum components that influence students' competence development, assessment strategies play a central role because they shape how students learn, engage with learning activities, and demonstrate achievement. Assessment not only evaluates learning outcomes but also directs students' learning behaviours and influences the competencies they acquire (de Vries et al., 2024). Contemporary higher education recognizes two complementary assessment approaches: formative assessment, which involves the systematic collection and use of evidence during learning to provide feedback that informs teaching and improves students' learning, and summative assessment, which evaluates the extent to which students have achieved intended learning outcomes at the end of a learning period for purposes of grading, certification, and accountability (Parmigiani et al., 2024; French et al., 2024). When appropriately designed and aligned with learning outcomes, both assessment approaches can contribute significantly to the development of employability skills by promoting reflection, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and lifelong learning. Although previous studies have demonstrated that formative and summative assessment improve students' learning, engagement, academic achievement, and collaborative learning (Concina, 2022; Meijer et al., 2022; Segbenya et al., 2023; Quinlan et al., 2024), limited empirical evidence exists regarding their influence on employability skills among university students, particularly within Art and Design programmes in Uganda. Addressing this knowledge gap is important for informing assessment practices that better prepare graduates for the world of work. Therefore, this study examined the influence of assessment

strategies on employability skills among undergraduate students in the School of Industrial and Fine Art at Kyambogo University.

Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of formative assessment on employability skills among undergraduate Art and Design students at Kyambogo University.
2. To determine the influence of summative assessment on employability skills among undergraduate Art and Design students at Kyambogo University.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

This study was guided by Programme Theory developed by Bickman (1987a), which explains how programme components interact to achieve intended outcomes. The theory posits that programme effectiveness depends on the logical alignment between programme inputs, activities, outputs, and expected outcomes, and that desired outcomes are achieved when programme implementation reflects the assumptions underlying programme design (Bickman, 1987b). Accordingly, programme success is influenced not only by programme design but also by the quality and coherence of its implementation (Finney et al., 2021; Nash, 2019). Within educational settings, Programme Theory assumes that curriculum content, instructional strategies, and assessment practices are interrelated programme components that should be aligned with intended learning outcomes. Effective educational programmes therefore establish coherence between what is taught, how it is taught, how learning is assessed, and the competencies learners are expected to acquire (Finney et al., 2021; Smith & Finney, 2020). When these programme components are well aligned, learners are more likely to achieve the desired educational outcomes. In the present study, Programme Theory provided the theoretical basis for examining the Art and Design curriculum as a programme designed to develop students' employability skills. Specifically, the theory informed the proposition that assessment practices as key curriculum implementation component, influences the acquisition of employability skills. The theory therefore provided a framework for examining how the implementation of these curriculum components contributes to preparing graduates with competencies required for successful participation in the labour market.

Assessment Strategies and Students' Employability Skills

Assessment strategies refer to the systematic and planned approaches used by educators to collect, interpret, and utilize evidence of students' learning to improve instruction and evaluate the achievement of intended learning outcomes (Mutch, 2002; Zou et al., 2024). They play a central role in teaching and learning by enabling educators to monitor learning progress, provide feedback, support instructional decision-making, and promote learner engagement, reflection, and self-evaluation, thereby linking curriculum implementation with intended learning outcomes (Heil & Ifenthaler, 2023; Kusurkar et al., 2023; Levy-Feldman, 2025). According to the reviewed

Kyambogo University (2024) Bachelor of Arts and Design Curriculum, assessment comprises formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment involves continuous activities such as quizzes, classroom discussions, observations, peer assessment, self-assessment, and feedback that support learning improvement during instruction (Chand & Pillay, 2024; Ismail et al., 2022; Kartal, 2024), whereas summative assessment involves end-of-course evaluations, including final examinations, standardized tests, portfolios, presentations, culminating projects, and end-of-course papers, to determine the extent to which intended learning outcomes have been achieved (Chand & Pillay, 2024; Ismail et al., 2022). Together, these complementary assessment approaches promote learning, evaluate achievement, and support the development of students' employability competencies.

Formative Assessment and Students' Employability Skills

Formative assessment refers to the continuous process of gathering evidence of students' learning during instruction and using it to provide feedback, improve teaching, and support learners' progress (Kartal, 2024). It includes quizzes, classroom discussions, observations, peer assessment, self-assessment, and feedback activities that enable learners to identify strengths and weaknesses, reflect on their learning, and continuously improve performance (Chand & Pillay, 2024). Consequently, formative assessment promotes communication, critical thinking, collaboration, self-management, and reflective learning, which are essential employability competencies. Empirical studies (e.g., Concina, 2022; Meijer et al., 2022; Quinlan et al., 2024; Segbenya et al., 2023) consistently show that formative assessment enhances employability-related skills. Concina (2022) found that self- and peer-assessment improved reflective practice, evaluative judgement, communication, feedback literacy, and lifelong learning, while Meijer et al. (2022) reported that collaborative assessment strengthened teamwork, communication, responsibility, and collaborative problem-solving. Similarly, Segbenya et al. (2023) established that continuous learner-centred assessment significantly predicted communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving, whereas Quinlan et al. (2024) found that authentic formative assessment enhanced student engagement, autonomy, creativity, reflective learning, and critical thinking. Despite this evidence, most studies were conducted outside Uganda and focused on general higher education rather than Art and Design students, creating contextual and population gaps. Moreover, some examined learning outcomes, student engagement, or collaborative learning instead of employability skills, creating empirical gaps. These contextual, empirical and population gaps justified the present study among Art and Design students at Kyambogo University. Thus, the study tested the hypothesis:

H1: Formative assessment strategies have a statistically significant influence on students' employability skills.

Summative Assessment and Students' Employability Skills

Summative assessment refers to the evaluation of students' learning at the end of a unit, course, or programme to determine the extent to which intended learning outcomes have been achieved (Ismail et al., 2022). It includes standardized examinations, final tests, portfolios, research papers, presentations, culminating projects, and other performance-based tasks that evaluate learners' overall competence (Chand & Pillay, 2024). Beyond measuring academic achievement, authentic summative assessment enables learners to demonstrate knowledge and skills in professional contexts, thereby strengthening employability competencies. Empirical studies (Alinier et al., 2024; Ajjawi et al., 2024; Connolly et al., 2023; Kitchen, 2024; Lambert et al., 2026; Sokhanvar et al., 2021; Van et al., 2025) consistently show that authentic and industry-oriented summative assessment enhances employability skills. Alinier et al. (2024) found that authentic assessment promoted critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and professional judgement, while Connolly et al. (2023), Kitchen (2024), Lambert et al. (2026), and Van et al. (2025) reported that projects, workplace-based assessments, industry partnerships, presentations, and authentic professional tasks strengthened teamwork, communication, workplace confidence, professional identity, leadership, and problem-solving. Similarly, Sokhanvar et al. (2021) established that projects, portfolios, reports, simulations, and workplace-oriented tasks enhanced communication, collaboration, critical thinking, self-awareness, and workplace readiness, whereas Ajjawi et al. (2024) argued that authentic assessment promotes adaptability, professional judgement, and lifelong learning. Despite this evidence, most studies were conducted in developed countries and focused on disciplines other than Art and Design, creating contextual and population gaps. These contextual gaps justified the present study among Art and Design students at Kyambogo University. There, the study tested the hypothesis:

H2: Summative assessment strategies have a statistically significant influence on students' employability skills.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Sample

This study adopted a quantitative research approach involving the collection and analysis of numerical data to establish the relationship between assessment strategies and employability skills among university students. Specifically, a correlational research design was employed because it enables the examination of relationships between variables without manipulating them (Putri et al., 2025). In the present study, assessment strategies constituted the independent variable, while employability skills represented the dependent variable. Consequently, the study sought to establish the relationship between formative and summative assessment practices and the development of employability skills among Art and Design students. The study population comprised 1,870 undergraduate students enrolled in the School of Industrial and Fine Art at Kyambogo University during the 2024/2025 academic year. The accessible population consisted

of 624 third-year students drawn from the Departments of Visual Communication, Fine Art, and Industrial and Commercial Art because they had undertaken most of the curriculum and assessment activities and were therefore better positioned to evaluate the contribution of assessment strategies to the development of employability skills. A sample of 394 students was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table and selected through simple random sampling, thereby giving every eligible student an equal chance of participating in the study. Of the 394 questionnaires administered, 378 were completed and returned, representing a response rate of 95.9%, which basing on Babbie (2020) was considered adequate for statistical analysis

Measurement

Data were collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire because it facilitates the collection of standardized responses from a large number of respondents within a relatively short period and enables efficient quantitative analysis (Taherdoost, 2022). The dependent variable, employability skills, was operationalized using eight dimensions, namely lifelong learning, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership, adaptability, and digital competencies. The lifelong learning construct was adapted from Uzunboylu and Hürsen (2011). Communication was adapted from Guo and Asmawi (2024) and Campbell and Akdemir (2016). Teamwork was adapted from McEwan et al. (2023), problem-solving from Sanatkar and Rubin (2023), critical thinking from Rodríguez-Rojas et al. (2024), leadership from Da'as (2017), adaptability from Krijgsheld et al. (2024), and digital competencies from Mejías-Acosta et al. (2024). The independent variable, assessment strategies, comprised two constructs: formative assessment and summative assessment. The formative assessment items were adapted from Black and Wiliam (1998), while the summative assessment items were adapted from Linn (2008). All questionnaire items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale enabled respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement with each statement and was considered appropriate because it is simple to administer, easy for respondents to understand, and suitable for measuring perceptions and attitudes.

Data Quality Control

The questionnaire was subjected to validity and reliability testing before the main data analysis. Content validity was established using the Content Validity Index (CVI) based on evaluations by five experts in curriculum studies, educational assessment, and educational management. The experts assessed the relevance, clarity, representativeness, and suitability of the questionnaire items in measuring the intended constructs. For the dependent variable, employability skills, the CVI values obtained were 0.860 for lifelong learning, 0.880 for communication, 0.900 for teamwork, 0.900 for problem-solving, 0.860 for critical thinking, 0.840 for leadership, 0.860 for adaptability, and 0.860 for digital competencies. For the independent variable, the CVI values were 0.895 for formative assessment and 0.880 for summative assessment. All the coefficients exceeded

the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 recommended by Batalla et al. (2022), indicating that the instrument possessed satisfactory content validity.

Construct validity was subsequently established through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Following the recommendation of Jordan and Spiess (2019), only questionnaire items with factor loadings of 0.50 or above were retained for subsequent analysis. The employability skills construct recorded factor loading ranges of 0.644-0.804 for lifelong learning, 0.505-0.736 for communication, 0.618-0.830 for teamwork, 0.643-0.817 for problem-solving, 0.566-0.803 for critical thinking, 0.759-0.921 for leadership, 0.658–0.834 for adaptability, and 0.537-0.758 for digital competencies. Similarly, the formative assessment items attained factor loadings ranging from 0.575 to 0.883, while the summative assessment items ranged from 0.683 to 0.904. Since all retained items exceeded the recommended minimum factor loading of 0.50, they were considered adequate measures of their respective constructs.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient computed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The employability skills constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.738 for lifelong learning, 0.761 for communication, 0.780 for teamwork, 0.796 for problem-solving, 0.720 for critical thinking, 0.880 for leadership, 0.847 for adaptability, and 0.765 for digital competencies. Similarly, the assessment strategy constructs demonstrated high internal consistency, with formative assessment ($\alpha = 0.885$) and summative assessment ($\alpha = 0.867$). Since all Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 recommended by Taber (2018), the questionnaire was considered sufficiently reliable for collecting data for the study.

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 31.0). Prior to the main analysis, the dataset was screened for completeness, missing values, outliers, and compliance with the assumptions of parametric statistics. Little's Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test indicated that the missing data occurred completely at random ($\chi^2 = 9451.210$, df = 9420, p = .408), and the few missing values were imputed using the Expectation Maximization (EM) method. No problematic outliers were detected. The data also satisfied the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity, confirming their suitability for parametric analyses. Descriptive statistics comprising means and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of assessment strategies and employability skills. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to establish the direction and strength of the relationship between assessment strategies and employability skills, while multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive influence of formative and summative assessment on employability skills and the extent to which assessment

strategies explained variations in employability skills among Art and Design students. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% level ($p < .05$).

Ethical Issues

Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process. Ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Uganda Christian University (UCU-REC) before commencement of data collection. Thereafter, research clearance was obtained from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), while administrative permission to access the study site was granted by Kyambogo University. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty, and guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. No identifying information was collected, and all data were used strictly for academic purposes. The findings were reported in aggregate form to ensure that individual participants and the institution could not be identified. Throughout the study, the principles of honesty, objectivity, beneficence, and respect for participants were upheld to ensure that no physical, psychological, or social harm resulted from participation.

RESULTS

Background Characteristics

To provide context for the study findings, this section presents the background characteristics of the respondents. These characteristics were important in understanding the composition of the sample and in interpreting the results within the demographic and academic context of the students surveyed. Specifically, the analysis considered the distribution of respondents by gender, age groups, and departmental affiliation as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Background Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	209	55.3
	Female	169	44.7
	Total	378	100.0
Age groups	20–25 years	306	81.0
	Above 25 years	72	19.0
	Total	378	100.0
Department	Visual Communication	85	22.5
	Fine Art	130	34.4
	Industrial and Commercial Art	163	43.1
	Total	378	100.0

The findings in Table 1 indicate that 209 (55.3%) of the respondents were male and 169 (44.7%) were female, reflecting a slight male majority but a relatively balanced gender distribution. This balanced representation enhanced the credibility of the findings by ensuring that the perspectives of both male and female students were adequately captured. Regarding age, 306 (81.0%) of the respondents were aged 20–25 years, while 72 (19.0%) were above 25 years. The predominance of respondents within the conventional undergraduate age bracket suggesting that participants were well positioned to assess the extent to which the Art and Design curriculum equips them with employability skills for the labour market. By department, 163 (43.1%) of the respondents were from Industrial and Commercial Art, 130 (34.4%) from Fine Art, and 85 (22.5%) from Visual Communication. Although Industrial and Commercial Art had the highest representation, the inclusion of students from all three departments ensured that the findings reflected perspectives across the major disciplines within the School of Art and Industrial Design. Precisely, the demographic characteristics indicate that the study involved respondents from diverse academic and demographic backgrounds, providing an appropriate basis for examining the effectiveness of the Art and Design curriculum in developing employability skills and enhancing the contextual validity of the findings.

Descriptive Analysis and Correlation of Assessment Practices with Employability Skills

To determine the perceived levels of employability skills among the participating students and their perceptions of the implementation of formative and summative assessment practices, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted. Subsequently, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the assessment practice dimensions, namely formative assessment and summative assessment and students' employability skills. The results of the descriptive and correlation analyses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation of Assessment Practices and Employability Skills

	Means	Std.	Employability Skills	Formative Assessment	Summative Assessment
Employability Skills			1		
Formative Assessment	3.72		0.329** 0.000	1	
Summative Assessment	3.98		0.262** 0.000	0.340** 0.000	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 2 show high mean scores and low standard deviations for employability skills (Mean = 3.64; Std. = 0.294), formative assessment (Mean = 3.72; Std. = 0.691), and summative assessment (Mean = 3.98; Std. = 0.66). These descriptive results indicate that students perceived their employability skills and the implementation of formative and summative assessment practices positively. The low standard deviations suggested limited variability in responses and a

considerable degree of agreement among respondents. Correlation analysis indicated that formative assessment ($r = .329$, $p < .001$) and summative assessment ($r = .262$, $p < .001$) had positive, statistically significant relationships with employability skills, suggesting that greater implementation of summative assessment practices is associated with improved employability skills among students. The magnitude of the correlation coefficients suggests that formative assessment had a stronger relationship with employability skills than summative assessment. Therefore, the results suggest that both formative and summative assessment practices are positively associated with employability skills among students. However, formative assessment exhibited the strongest relationship, implying that continuous assessment activities such as feedback, peer assessment, self-assessment, and ongoing monitoring of learning may contribute more substantially to the development of employability skills than end-of-course assessment practices alone.

Regression of Employability Skills on Assessment Practices

At the confirmatory level, to establish whether formative assessment and summative assessment predicted employability skills among students, a regression analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression of Employability Skills on Assessment Practices

	Standardized Coefficients Beta (β)	Significance
Formative Assessment	0.271	0.000
Summative Assessment	0.170	0.001
R2 = 0.134		
R2 = 0.129		
F= 28.921, p = 0.000		

Dependent Variable: Employability Skills

The findings presented in Table 3 indicate that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 28.921$, $p < .001$), suggesting that assessment practices significantly predict employability skills among students. The model explained 13.4% of the variation in employability skills ($R^2 = 0.134$), implying that formative and summative assessment practices jointly accounted for 13.4% of the differences in students' employability skills. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.129$) further indicates that, after controlling for model complexity, assessment practices contributed approximately 12.9% of the variance in employability skills, while the remaining 87.1% was attributable to other factors not included in the model. The results further revealed that formative assessment ($\beta = 0.271$, $p < .001$) and summative assessment ($\beta = 0.170$, $p = 0.001$) had a positive and statistically significant influence on employability skills, indicating that effective implementation of formative and summative assessment practices contribute positively to the development of employability skills. The magnitudes of the standardized beta coefficients indicate

that formative assessment exerted a stronger influence on employability skills than summative assessment. Specifically, formative assessment emerged as the most important predictor of employability skills, followed by summative assessment. Thus, the results demonstrate that assessment practices play a significant role in influencing employability skills, although their explanatory power is modest. The findings imply that universities should strengthen both formative and summative assessment practices, with particular emphasis on formative assessment approaches such as continuous feedback, self-assessment, peer assessment, and reflective learning activities. Such assessment strategies are more likely to enhance students' acquisition of employability skills and improve their preparedness for the world of work.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings revealed that both formative and summative assessments significantly and positively influenced employability skills among Art and Design students. These findings suggest that assessment practices extend beyond measuring academic achievement to facilitating the development of workplace competencies. Consistent with Programme Theory (Bickman, 1987), assessment serves as a critical programme component through which intended curriculum outcomes are reinforced. The positive influence of both assessment approaches demonstrates that when assessment is aligned with curriculum objectives, it contributes significantly to students' acquisition of employability skills. Specifically, finding that formative assessment significantly influenced employability skills supports the proposition of Programme Theory that continuous feedback and learner engagement strengthen programme outcomes. Formative assessment provides students with regular opportunities to reflect on their learning, receive feedback, and improve their performance, thereby promoting communication, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, and self-management. This finding is consistent with studies by Segbenya et al. (2023), Concina (2022), Meijer et al. (2022), Quinlan et al. (2024), and Sokhanvar et al. (2021), which reported that formative approaches such as continuous assessment, peer assessment, self-assessment, collaborative learning, and feedback significantly enhance employability competencies. The consistency between the present findings and previous research suggests that formative assessment creates continuous learning opportunities that enable students to develop transferable workplace skills while actively participating in their own learning.

Furthermore, the finding that summative assessment significantly influenced employability skills indicates that well-designed summative assessments also contribute to graduate capability development when they require students to demonstrate knowledge and skills in authentic contexts. This finding aligns with Programme Theory, which emphasizes that programme components should reinforce intended outcomes throughout programme implementation. It is consistent with studies by Alinier et al. (2024), Ajjawi et al. (2024), Connolly et al. (2023), Kitchen (2024), Lambert et al. (2026), and Van et al. (2025), which found that authentic, performance-based, and industry-oriented summative assessments strengthen communication, professional judgement, creativity, teamwork, workplace confidence, and professional identity. The agreement between

these studies and the present findings suggests that summative assessment contributes to employability by requiring students to integrate knowledge and demonstrate competencies expected in professional practice rather than merely recalling theoretical content. Precisely, the findings demonstrate that both formative and summative assessment are important determinants of employability skills among Art and Design students. From the perspective of Programme Theory, assessment functions as a key mechanism linking curriculum implementation to intended graduate outcomes. Together, formative assessment supports the continuous development of employability competencies through feedback and reflection, while summative assessment consolidates these competencies by providing opportunities to demonstrate them in authentic and professionally relevant contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that assessment practices are fundamentally important in enhancing employability skills among Art and Design students. Specifically, both formative and summative assessment significantly and positively contribute to the development of employability skills. Formative assessment enhances employability by providing students with continuous opportunities to receive feedback, reflect on their learning, engage in peer and self-assessment, and improve their communication, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, and self-management skills. This is when lecturers frequently employ formative assessment practices such as quizzes, classroom discussions, timely feedback, peer review, and reflective learning, thereby creating a learner-centred environment that supports the continuous development of workplace competencies. The study further concluded that summative assessment contributes significantly to employability skills when assessment tasks require students to demonstrate knowledge and competencies in authentic and professionally relevant contexts. This includes lecturers widely using final examinations, culminating projects, research projects, presentations, demonstrations, and practical assignments to evaluate students' achievement of learning outcomes. These assessment approaches provide students with opportunities to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application, thereby strengthening communication, professional judgement, creativity, teamwork, workplace confidence, and professional competence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that lecturers should strengthen the use of formative assessment by integrating continuous, learner-centred assessment practices throughout the teaching and learning process. Lecturers should regularly provide timely and constructive feedback, promote self- and peer-assessment, facilitate reflective learning, and use classroom discussions and continuous assessment activities to monitor students' progress. These practices are likely to enhance students' communication, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, problem-solving, and self-management skills, thereby improving their employability. The study further recommends that the School of Art and Industrial Design should strengthen the implementation of summative assessment by adopting

authentic and industry-oriented assessment approaches. Lecturers should increase the use of practical projects, portfolios, exhibitions, presentations, demonstrations, and other performance-based assessment tasks that require students to apply knowledge and skills in contexts similar to professional practice. The school should also strengthen partnerships with industry to ensure that summative assessment reflects workplace expectations and equips graduates with competencies required for successful transition into employment. Because the study focused on formative and summative assessment, relied on self-reported questionnaire data, and was conducted at one university, the findings may not capture all factors influencing employability skills or generalise to other higher education contexts. Future research should examine additional curriculum and institutional factors, include students from multiple universities and disciplines, and use mixed-methods designs to validate and deepen understanding of how assessment practices support employability skills.

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