



A Landscape of Practice Approach To Enhance Employability: Insights from Domestic and International Postgraduates

Journal:	<i>Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning</i>
Manuscript ID	HESWBL-11-2023-0320.R1
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Communities of practice, Lifewide learning, Education for sustainable development, Employability, Social capital, Psychological capital

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

A Landscape of Practice Approach To Enhance Employability: Insights from Domestic and International Postgraduates

Purpose: Drawing on a theoretical framework of sustainable career ecosystem theory, our paper aims to consider how domestic and international postgraduates can enhance their employability through participation in a landscape of practice.

Design/methodology/approach: The study employed an exploratory, longitudinal case study design to capture students' lived experiences on an 18-month Master of Professional Practice course at a higher education institution in New Zealand. The data collection procedure involved field note observations (months 1-4), a focus group (month 13) and narrative frames (months 16-18). The sample was domestic students from New Zealand (n=2) and international students from Asia (n=5).

Findings: One's participation in multiple communities of practice represents their landscape of practice and a commitment to lifewide learning. Through participation in various communities of practice, domestic and international students can enhance their employability in three ways: (i) boundary encounters to develop social capital, (ii) transcending contexts to enhance cultural capital, and (iii) acknowledging the development of psychological capital and career agency.

Originality: Our work offers one of the earliest empirical validations of sustainable career ecosystem theory. Expressly, communities of practice represent various contexts whereby employability capital is developed over time. Additionally, the postgraduate students themselves are portrayed as interconnected and interdependent actors, presenting a novel framing of such dependencies at the micro-level of the ecosystem. The practical implications come from informing universities of the value of a landscape of practice to enhance the employability of domestic and international students in preparation for sustainable careers and to promote the sustainability of the career ecosystem.

Keywords: landscape of practice, community of practice, lifewide learning, sustainable career, career ecosystem.

Word Count: 6,999

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

Introduction

International students are vital to the sustainability of higher education institutions because they pay the actual cost of the degree course, unlike domestic students (Rogers, 2023; Soltani and Tran, 2023). These students also significantly benefit the economy of the country where they study. For example, the intake of international students in the 2021/2022 academic year contributed £41.9 billion to the UK economy (Universities UK, 2023). Opportunities to study in a host country are also appealing to students since they gain an international education, experience of a new culture, and have the opportunity to develop networks (Soltani, 2018; Soltani and Tran, 2021). Additionally, there is emerging interest in developing strategies to prepare international students during their higher education studies to develop employability and be capable of navigating the host country's labour market (Pham, 2022; Soltani and Loret, 2019). However, the volatile and evolving nature of labour markets, combined with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitate additional exploration of how to enhance the employability of international and domestic university students.

To address this gap in the literature, our research focuses on New Zealand as it offers a fascinating case for three reasons. First, New Zealand follows a broader trend across the OECD countries, whereby students from Asia make up the greatest volume of international students (OECD, 2023). Second, international student numbers have increased by nearly 98% to 34,000 since the country re-opened its borders in August 2022 following the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions (Education New Zealand, 2023). Third, "the share of temporary migrants in New Zealand's workforce is one of the largest among OECD countries" (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2021, p. 1). Our study employed an exploratory, longitudinal case study design to capture the lived experiences of seven students (n=2 domestic. n=5 international from Asia) enrolled in an 18-month Master of Professional Practice course. We posit that the potential

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

exists for reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships whereby interactions within and between international and domestic students can enhance their employability.

Therefore, drawing on a theoretical framework of sustainable career ecosystem theory, our paper aims to consider how domestic and international postgraduates can enhance their employability through participation in a landscape of practice. The theoretical contribution comes from one of the earliest empirical validations of sustainable career ecosystem theory, whereby communities of practice represent the various contexts within a landscape of practice where employability capital is developed over time. Additionally, the postgraduate students themselves are portrayed as interconnected and interdependent actors, presenting a novel framing of such dependencies at the micro-level of the ecosystem. The practical implications come from informing universities of the value of a landscape of practice to enhance the employability of domestic and international students in preparation for sustainable careers and to promote the sustainability of the career ecosystem.

Literature Review

Sustainable Career Ecosystem Theory

According to Iansiti and Levien (2004), an ecosystem refers to “a system that contains a large number of loosely coupled (interconnected) actors who depend on each other to ensure the overall effectiveness of the system” (p. 5). Career ecosystem theory locates an ecosystem in the context of career studies and has traditionally framed the interconnected and interdependent actors as individuals, organisations, and societies (Baruch, 2015; Baruch and Rousseau, 2019).

Another theory that has developed in parallel is sustainable career theory, which posits that sustainable careers have three dimensions: *person*, *context*, and *time* (Van der Heijden and De Vos, 2015). Traditionally, this has been framed as an individual employee navigating work and social spaces across their career span (De Vos *et al.*, 2020).

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

In recognition of the overlapping and complementary dimensions of these two theories, Donald (2023) conceptualised sustainable career ecosystem theory, whereby a sustainable career ecosystem is defined as

“a variety of *interconnected* and *interdependent actors* across higher education institutions [educational] and workplace *contexts*, whereby the lives and careers of *individuals* evolve and play out over *time* with an emphasis on *sustainable outcomes* for the individual, organizations, and broader society” (p. xxvii, *emphasis added*).

Moreover, Baruch *et al.* (2023) propose that a sustainable career ecosystem can incorporate the flow of talent between higher education institutions and industry.

In the context of our paper, a *person* refers to a postgraduate student, *context* refers to the landscape of practice, and *time* captures the 18-month duration of their studies. By exploring the interconnected and interdependent nature of these postgraduate students, we specifically focus on one of the micro-level actors of a career ecosystem and how their interaction with each other through a landscape of practice can sustain the broader career ecosystem.

Landscape of Practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) theorised the concept of a community of practice as any group of people that have ongoing mutual engagement, a shared enterprise (i.e., shared goals), and a shared repertoire (i.e., values, an exchange of skills, knowledge, or experiences). One’s interaction between different communities of practice represents a landscape of practice characterised by “shared practices, boundaries, peripheries, overlaps, connections, and encounters” (Wenger, 2010, p. 130). The unit of analysis in a landscape of practice is ‘practice’, a unifying space that brings individuals together within a specific context. Practice refers to what graduates know (i.e., abstract) and what graduates do (i.e., concrete), which is holistic and individualistic. The use of learning communities of practice has also received interest in

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

the context of degree apprenticeships (Nottingham and Mao, 2023) and virtual learning environments during work-based learning (Fletcher, 2023).

As a landscape of practice, higher education is a complex system that consists of multifarious communities of practice, whereby the space between one community of practice and another represents a boundary. Our focus on the role of participating in a landscape of practice for enhancing the employability of students is timely since Nikou and Luukkonen (2024) found that international students in Finland were less likely to remain in the host country following graduation if they struggled “assimilating into the community or making friends” (p. 76).

In this paper, we focus on the lived experience of domestic and international postgraduate students as they encounter boundaries between communities of practice, transcend such contexts, and acknowledge the balance between agency and contextual factors. Our attention now turns to framing graduate employability and considering three forms of employability capital.

Employability Capital

Over the last decade, there has been a shift from a skill-based view of graduate employability to a more holistic approach (Holmes, 2013). Various prominent models of employability capital have been developed (e.g., Clarke, 2018; Donald *et al.*, 2019; Tomlinson, 2017), which have recently been integrated into the Employability Capital Growth Model (ECGM; Donald *et al.*, 2024). However, there remains a mismatch between higher education provision and labour market requirements, particularly for international students navigating new cultures and customs (Pudyanti and Pham, 2023). Therefore, our study considers social, cultural, and psychological forms of capital that are dominant across various models, as well as central to Pham’s (2021) capitals-based approach, which has been applied to international students as a

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

1
2
3 means to prepare them to navigate host labour markets (Soltani, 2021a, 2021b). We are
4
5 particularly interested in how participation in a landscape of practice impacts one's
6
7 employability capital. For instance, does participation through a lifewide learning approach
8
9 (Cole and Donald, 2022) and interactions with other individuals operating within a career
10
11 ecosystem (Baruch, 2015) lead to increased perceived employability capital? If so, to what
12
13 extent do domestic and international students' lived experiences and perceptions align or
14
15 diverge?
16
17

Social Capital

18
19 We adopt Donald *et al.*'s (2024) definition of social capital as “the resources an individual
20
21 gains via establishing and nurturing relationships through networks with various other
22
23 individuals and groups, leading to enhanced self-perceived employability via an understanding
24
25 of values, norms, and practices” (p. 7). These networks and interpersonal connections have
26
27 been shown to enhance one's self-perceived employability (Pudyanti and Pham, 2023), such
28
29 as empirical studies looking at undergraduates in the UK (e.g., Donald *et al.*, 2019; Tomlinson,
30
31 2017) and international students in New Zealand (Soltani, 2021a, 2021b). Within a landscape
32
33 of practice, the development of networks and interpersonal connections occurs through
34
35 movement across boundaries between various communities of practice. Therefore, research
36
37 question one asks:
38
39
40
41
42
43

44
45 *Do boundary encounters within a landscape of practice help postgraduates develop*
46
47 *social capital?*
48

Cultural Capital

49
50 We also adopt Donald *et al.*'s (2024) definition of cultural capital as “the influence of the
51
52 situations experienced by an individual leading to the accumulation of culturally valued
53
54 knowledge to determine one's self-perceived employability and functionality within the labour
55
56 market” (p. 7). Advancing cultural capital could be particularly significant for international
57
58
59
60

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

students to develop “culturally valued information, dispositions, and behaviors to navigate written and unwritten workplace rules” (Pudyanti and Pham, 2023, p. 135). Cultural capital has also been shown to be important for domestic undergraduate students via empirical studies in the UK (Donald *et al.*, 2019; Tomlinson, 2017) and international students in New Zealand (Soltani, 2021a; Soltani *et al.*, 2022). Within a landscape of practice, exposure to a greater number of communities of practice has the potential to increase one’s understanding of diverse cultures within various contexts. Furthermore, domestic and international students may have the opportunity to learn from each other for the benefit of both parties. Therefore, research question two asks:

Does the process of transcending contexts by interacting with other community members within a landscape of practice enhance cultural capital?

Psychological Capital

For consistency, we also adopt Donald *et al.*’s (2024) definition of psychological capital as “the characteristics of an individual that determine ‘who you are’, building on social cognitive theory and positive psychology, to offer a personal resource for enhancing self-perceived employability and navigating volatile and global labour market environments” (p. 7). Empirical research looking at graduates in India showed how hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism as dimensions of psychological capital, when combined with career agency, can lead to increased well-being outcomes (Nimmi *et al.*, 2021; 2022) and career sustainability indicators of health, happiness, and productivity (De Vos and Van der Heijden, 2015; Van der Heijden, 2005). Such research is timely, given the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of university students and graduates per empirical research in the UK (Donald and Jackson, 2022). Therefore, research question three asks:

Does participation in a landscape of practice enhance psychological capital and career agency?

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

Our attention now turns to the method before presenting the findings, discussion, and implications for theory and practice.

Method

Sample and Research Design

The phenomenological research took an exploratory approach by employing a longitudinal case study design to capture students' subjectively lived experiences. The sample was an entire cohort of seven students enrolled in an 18-month Master of Professional Practice course at a higher education institution in New Zealand. Two participants were domestic students (i.e., from New Zealand), while the remaining five were Asian international students. Four of the participants identified as male, and three as female. We opted to look at the view of domestic and international students based on the views of Pudyanti and Pham (2023) in Australia, stating that these two groups can have the potential for areas of alignment and divergence about their lived experiences.

Data Collection Procedure

The seven students were invited to participate by the lead researcher at the beginning of their studies via email. Ethical approval was obtained via the institutional review board, and all participants provided informed consent. The data collection procedure took place at three separate time points, involving field note observations (months 1-4), a focus group (month 13) and narrative frames (months 16-18).

Field Note Observations

The lead researcher took field notes (months 1-4) and during the focus group (month 13). Field notes were an essential source of data (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018) because they provided information such as what topics, practices, and exercises the students were doing, how they did

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

1
2
3 them, the challenges they faced, and other multimodal practices that were otherwise difficult
4
5 to observe. The initial field notes helped to inform the semi-structured nature of the focus group
6
7 questions. In contrast, the focus group field notes helped capture student and facilitator
8
9 interactions. Cumulatively, 25 hours of interaction data were collected.
10
11

Focus Group

12
13
14 The students participated in one semi-structured focus group (month 13), which lasted for 2.5
15
16 hours, where they shared their experiences of participating in the Master of Professional
17
18 Practice program. The focus group was semi-structured. However, we ensured plenty of
19
20 opportunities for the students to provide further explanations via follow-up questions.
21
22 Participants also had the option to follow up with the researcher if they had any additional
23
24 thoughts in the three weeks following the focus group. Two additional interviews were
25
26 conducted, lasting three hours in total. All interactions were audio recorded and subsequently
27
28 transcribed. The participants then validated the transcriptions to ensure accuracy.
29
30
31

Narrative Frames

32
33
34 Each student independently participated in an exercise based on narrative frames (months 16-
35
36 18), which used sentence starters or prompts to stimulate the written expression of ideas
37
38 (Barkhuizen, 2014). In our study, the narrative frames were structured based on our three
39
40 research questions. The aim was for the students to produce a coherent story by reflecting on
41
42 their lived experiences (Barkhuizen and Wette, 2008).
43
44
45

46
47 The narrative frames had four parts. In part one, participants shared general information
48
49 about themselves (nationality, age, sex, and how long they had lived in New Zealand). This
50
51 allowed the research team to humanise the narrative frames, encouraging the students to
52
53 provide more in-depth and personal responses. In the remaining three parts, participants were
54
55 asked to talk about various communities they were part of, their relevant social ties, how they
56
57
58
59
60

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

1
2
3 developed their cultural understanding when participating in different social groups, and what
4
5 strategies they used to overcome personal challenges.
6
7

8 The structured format of the frames allowed students to share their experiences
9
10 meaningfully while enabling cross-case and within-case analysis (Soltani and Zhang, 2023).
11
12 Students were emailed prompts and given three months to complete the frames (months 16-18
13
14 of data collection), which were all returned to the lead researcher before the allocated deadline.
15
16
17
18

Analytical Procedure

19
20
21 To analyse the data, we adopted a discourse analytic method (Jones, 2012). Initially, the data
22
23 generated from the three sources (field notes, focus group, narrative frames) was loaded into
24
25 NVivo 11. Next, each researcher used the three research questions to guide the coding themes
26
27 of (i) boundary encounters and social capital, (ii) transcending contexts and cultural capital,
28
29 and (iii) psychological capital and career agency. The researchers worked independently and
30
31 coded each of the three data sources in isolation (i.e., separate codes were developed for the
32
33 field notes, the focus group, and the narrative frames). The researchers continued to read the
34
35 data and refine the coding groups until they were satisfied with the groupings, which comprised
36
37 codes and categories (Miles *et al.*, 2014). Subsequently, the researchers met to share and
38
39 discuss their coding groups for the three data sources. Discussion between the researchers
40
41 showed a high inter-coder reliability at the code and category levels. The final stage involved
42
43 the researchers triangulating the codes and categories from the various data sources (Geertz,
44
45 1973). The triangulated findings of our study are now presented in response to each of the three
46
47 research questions.
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

Findings**Boundary Encounters and Social Capital**

Research Question One: Do boundary encounters within a landscape of practice help postgraduates develop social capital?

The findings indicate that domestic and international students each developed social capital through boundary encounters (i.e., interactions with others in different communities of practice) as part of a landscape of practice. By joining different communities and moving from one community to another, *students had multiple encounters with different community members that enhanced their social capital* (Field Note). However, there were variances between the motivations and the approaches for developing social capital between international and domestic students.

International students undertook a greater number of boundary encounters to build new connections within the host country. As Participant 4 (Narrative Frame) stated:

In the past, I did not like talking to strangers, and I often preferred to stay within my own social group, but my experiences in recent years taught me that there's no harm in reaching out to others. It does not only develop my interpersonal skills but also makes me feel supported.

Three of the five international students reported the boundary encounter of attending Church.

As Participant 5 (Focus Group) explained:

In the church community, I continue to learn about proper living and meaningful relations based on an eternal perspective and develop new connections.

Online community groups also proved popular, per Participant 3 (Focus Group):

Online group communities are my go-to place for queries I have, from job searches, visa concerns, finding accommodation, cooking recipes, etc.

Additionally, in-person contact with fellow students and lecturers proved valuable for gaining knowledge and developing connections:

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

1
2
3 *When I connect with other students, I learn more ways of doing research. I inevitably learn more*
4 *about communicating with an audience, aside from adding to my familiarity with a subject's*
5 *content resulting from additional input from others (Participant 5, Narrative Frame).*
6
7

8
9 *My dissertation supervisor was influential in helping me secure a position in a talent acquisition*
10 *team at a well-known company in New Zealand (Participant 2, Narrative Frame).*
11
12

13
14 For domestic students, there was increased emphasis on the strategic use of boundary
15 encounters, *focusing on seeking connections with individuals to develop their professional*
16 *networks, secure job opportunities, or secure funding for their own businesses (Field Note).* In
17 other words, domestic students consciously connected with individuals controlling wealth,
18 power, and resources in social and work contexts.
19
20

21
22 *Connecting with government agencies has led to developing new networks of people working*
23 *together to achieve a common goal and leading to successful outcomes for me (Participant 6,*
24 *Focus Group).*
25
26

Transcending Contexts and Cultural Capital

27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35 ***Research Question Two: Does the process of transcending contexts by interacting with other***
36
37
38
39 ***community members within a landscape of practice enhance cultural capital?***
40

41 The findings indicate that domestic and international students each developed cultural
42 capital through transcending contexts (i.e. participation in various communities of practice) as
43 part of a landscape of practice. However, *there were apparent differences between the needs*
44 *and purpose of acquiring cultural capital between the two groups of students (Field Note).*
45
46
47
48

49 International students found significant value in developing culturally valued information
50 and behaviours to navigate written and unwritten rules across various contexts. For instance,
51 Participant 1 (Focus Group) shared an experience of the cultural capital they gained from going
52 to church:
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

1
2
3 *I was often surprised with how most people would go out of their way to help me out – from*
4 *questions about job applications, travel destinations, visa applications, government requirements,*
5 *finding accommodation, and places to eat.*
6
7
8

9 Additionally, there was clear evidence of a desire to continually evolve and commit to a growth
10 mindset via lifewide learning opportunities, as evidenced by Participant 3 (Narrative Frame):
11

12
13
14 *Having contact with lots of different people that I met via different groups gave me a way of*
15 *learning valuable insights that helped me to adapt and grow – that practice of the capability to*
16 *learn something and do something new rather than doing the same thing.*
17
18
19

20
21 In contrast, domestic students felt they already possessed a high level of cultural capital
22 about the rules and norms playing out across various social spaces in New Zealand. However,
23 *their benefit from participating in various communities of practice came from exposure to peers*
24 *from diverse cultures, helping them to prepare for working with diverse teams as part of a*
25 *global labour market* (Field Note). Participant 7 (Narrative Frame) provides an example based
26 on their experience of working with a colleague from an international background while
27 undertaking the degree program:
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

36 *A colleague [from an international background] who was very strong academically and excelled*
37 *in several areas did not articulate her ideas verbally; she often transcribed them and provided*
38 *them in statistical formats. This person rarely spoke during meetings and did not feel they could*
39 *ask for help or clarification or contribute ideas as this was not their understanding of the*
40 *workplace norms. The experience helped me to understand the cultural differences more and*
41 *explain the needs of the team and that it was okay to contribute ideas and ask for help. After an*
42 *8-month period, the colleague felt comfortable with the expectations and, at that stage, engaged*
43 *much more with the team.*
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

Psychological Capital and Career Agency

Research Question Three: Does participation in a landscape of practice enhance psychological capital and career agency?

The findings indicate that psychological capital and career agency can be enhanced through participation in a landscape of practice. For this theme, there was *significant alignment between the views of international and domestic students* (Field Note). For instance, from the hope dimension of psychological capital, Participant 6 (Focus Group) observes:

When I encounter a problem, it encourages me to learn more about it. So, I think learning happens everywhere, and my connections with others can help me to remain positive and not lose hope.

Regarding self-efficacy, Participant 2 (Narrative Frame) shared:

As an international student or someone from an international background, I think I need to master the ability to adapt to a setting that is very different from what I am used to, especially with regard to the workplace. Being able to think laterally and find points of convergence or links between my own background and my new environment should allow me to learn quicker, thereby making any adjustments smoother.

From a resilience perspective, Participant 5 (Focus Group) noted:

I always observe how positive my mother is when she deals with some issues, and that becomes my subconscious way to solve things gradually.

Then, when considering optimism, Participant 3 (Focus Group) reflected:

We are in a competitive environment, so capabilities that always be positive and could change your language from negative to positive are beneficial and necessary.

Additionally, the participants noted the *benefits of career agency and the links to psychological capital of participating in a landscape of practice* (Field Note). As Participant 2 (Focus Group) explained:

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

My tutor helps me reflect on my experience, clarify my capabilities, and explore the authentic me and the professional goal I want to achieve.

Participant 4 (Narrative Frame) stated:

Sometimes, it is not possible to receive proper training or guidance via the traditional routes. In such cases, I either learn from other people sharing their experiences or through trial and error. The more people I talk to [across various communities of practice], the more strategies I develop and the more I can achieve.

While Participant 7 (Narrative Frame) observed:

I am always striving to learn more about new situations and contexts, and through my networks, I can reach out, ask questions, and find answers, which gives me a sense of control. A constant process of reflection and evaluation helps me to improve.

Discussion

One's participation in multiple communities of practice represents their landscape of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Our work focused explicitly on domestic and international postgraduates from Asia studying a Master of Professional Practice in New Zealand. The findings evidenced that through participation in various communities of practice, domestic and international students can enhance their employability in three ways: (i) boundary encounters to develop social capital, (ii) transcending contexts to enhance cultural capital, and (iii) acknowledging the development of psychological capital and career agency.

Consequently, we offer empirical validation of the conceptual position offered by Jackson (2016) that adopting a landscape of practice approach enables students to use their knowledge, skills, abilities, and resources to position themselves more effectively as capable individuals in the labour market. Our findings also support those of Padgett and Donald (2023), who found that international Master students studying the 'Global Marketing Professional' module in the UK found benefits from proactive career ownership and networking to enhance

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

1
2
3 their self-perceived employability. However, while their focus was on a curriculum-based
4
5 intervention, ours focused on a landscape of practice approach through engagement with
6
7 various communities of practice.
8
9

10 An interesting observation from our findings was the alignment and divergence between
11
12 domestic and international students from Asia studying in New Zealand. As a side note, there
13
14 were no differences found based on gender. From a boundary encounters perspective, both
15
16 groups of students gained social capital but with different motives. Domestic students targeted
17
18 building networks with those in positions of influence, while international students targeted
19
20 building networks that offered a sense of community. Our findings indicate that even when
21
22 domestic and international students seek to enhance their social capital, there are still disparities
23
24 in the gains acquired. However, lecturers can play some role in overcoming the disparities by
25
26 providing access to their pre-existing networks.
27
28
29

30 From a transcending contexts and cultural capital perspective, both groups of students
31
32 again gained significant benefits, albeit in different ways. Our findings, as expected, supported
33
34 the view that international students benefit from opportunities to develop culturally valuable
35
36 information and behaviours to navigate written and unwritten contexts (Soltani, 2018).
37
38 However, while domestic students may already have such an understanding of their own
39
40 culture, the opportunity to interact with international students was extremely valuable for
41
42 broadening their horizons by understanding different approaches and customs, as well as
43
44 preparing to work in globalised labour markets.
45
46
47
48

49 Finally, from a psychological capital and career agency perspective, both groups of
50
51 students gained significant benefits, albeit more aligned on this occasion. The findings
52
53 highlight the value of developing psychological capital and career agency to address issues of
54
55 well-being in student populations (Jackson and Donald, 2022) and to increase the likelihood of
56
57
58
59
60

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

sustainable career indicators of health, happiness, and productivity (Van der Heijden, 2005; Van der Heijden and De Vos, 2015).

Theoretical Contribution

Our work offers one of the earliest empirical validations of sustainable career ecosystem theory (Donald, 2023). From a sustainable career theory perspective (Van der Heijden and De Vos, 2015), the *person* represents postgraduate domestic and international students from Asia studying in New Zealand, the *context* represents the various communities of practice that make up the landscape of practice, while *time* represents the 18-month duration of study. Put differently, communities of practice represent various contexts whereby social capital, cultural capital, psychological capital, and career agency are developed over time. The view supports the position that time spent in higher education can prepare students for sustainable careers (De Vos *et al.*, 2020).

From a career ecosystem perspective (Baruch, 2015), the domestic and international postgraduate students themselves are portrayed as interconnected and interdependent actors, presenting a novel framing of such dependencies at the micro-level of the ecosystem. Our study also highlights the shared elements of a career ecosystem with a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), representing ongoing mutual engagement, shared goals, and a shared repertoire (i.e., values, an exchange of skills, knowledge, or experiences). However, we also observe differences in how domestic and international students experience the landscape of practice, supporting the view that individuals from different demographic groups can experience the contextual aspects of a career ecosystem in different ways (Quigley *et al.*, 2023).

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

Practical Implications

The practical implications come from informing universities of the value of participating in a landscape of practice to enhance the employability of domestic and international students in preparation for sustainable careers and to promote the sustainability of the career ecosystem.

Psychological capital and career agency have been shown to increase self-perceived employability and well-being outcomes in graduates in India (Nimmi *et al.*, 2021; 2022). Our findings indicate that these areas offer common ground for enhancing the employability of domestic and international postgraduate students in New Zealand. University career advisors should consider emphasising the value of the hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism dimensions of psychological capital and the significance of taking ownership of one's career to postgraduates. Encouraging students to participate in multiple communities of practice as part of their landscape of practice also supports calls by Cole and Donald (2022) for a more holistic approach to developing employability via an individual's commitment to lifewide and lifelong learning.

Additionally, universities should encourage interactions between domestic and international students, for example, via group work as part of module assessment. Such an approach offers reciprocal benefits for students by learning about different cultures and lived experiences, as well as fostering a sense of inclusivity in preparation for entry into the labour market. Therefore, university lecturers should be made aware of their influential role in curriculum design and ensure they offer access to their network of contacts, particularly for international students.

These interventions also benefit other actors within the ecosystem. For instance, universities gain from international tuition fee income and league table rankings linked to employment outcomes (albeit employability and employment are distinct constructs, whereby employability is the ability to do a job while employment is where one has a job at a specific

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

point in time). Employers benefit from an enhanced pool of graduate talent, leading to innovation, competitive advantage, and increased productivity, while national governments also benefit via increased taxation and national competitiveness. A landscape of practice approach thus appears to be an appealing way to increase students' employability and the likelihood of sustainable outcomes throughout the career ecosystem.

Limitations and Future Research

Our current study had a restricted focus on social, cultural, and psychological capital. Future studies could look at other forms of employability capital (see Donald *et al.* (2024) for an extensive literature review and development of an Employability Capital Growth Model).

Due to the small sample (two domestic and five international students) and the exploratory nature of our study, additional work is required to test and validate the initial conclusions we have drawn. Consequently, a quantitative approach may be beneficial here, as could cross-cultural comparisons (i.e., looking at postgraduate international students from Europe studying in New Zealand or at postgraduate international students from Asia studying in countries other than New Zealand). For instance, Hou (2023) examined Chinese international students' experiences in the USA. Such an approach could help to build a richer picture and a more nuanced understanding of how to enhance the employability of domestic and international students. It could also help tackle national and regional skills shortages (Suleman *et al.*, 2023) by developing a talent pipeline from higher education institutions into the labour market (Baruch *et al.*, 2023).

The study was also limited to focusing on time spent during postgraduate study in higher education. Future research could consider extending the longitudinal nature of the study by following such individuals after the completion of their postgraduate studies to a) address calls to bridge the graduate employability and worker employability literature (Akkermans *et al.*,

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

2024) and b) develop additional understanding around navigating different contexts over time per sustainable career theory (Van der Heijden and De Vos, 2015). Comparing the views of postgraduate and undergraduate students may also be of interest to consider areas of alignment and/or divergence.

Finally, our current study only looked at two high-level groups of students: domestic and international. We echo the views of Quigley *et al.* (2023) that “because systemic and contextual factors affect members of various demographic groups in dissimilar ways, the resilience of the career ecosystem is different for individuals based on their social identity” (p. 9). Isopahkala-Bouret *et al.* (2023) also highlight the positionality and inequality in graduate careers. We believe that integrating sustainable career theory and career ecosystem theory into sustainable career ecosystem theory offers a valuable theoretical framework to underpin such further exploration.

Conclusion

Our study aimed to consider how domestic and international graduates can enhance their employability through participation in a landscape of practice. The findings showed three distinct ways: (i) boundary encounters to develop social capital, (ii) transcending contexts to enhance cultural capital, and (iii) acknowledging the development of psychological capital and career agency. Additionally, differences in motives for developing social and cultural capital were identified, while there was greater alignment between domestic and international students for developing psychological capital and career agency. The theoretical contribution came from empirically testing sustainable career ecosystem theory by framing postgraduates as interconnected actors within a landscape of practice. Practical implications came from providing additional insights into how to prepare international and domestic postgraduates for sustainable careers.

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

Declaration of Interest Statements**Competing Interests**

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

Funding

No funds, grants, or other support were received.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained via the Institutional Review Board.

Consent

All participants provided informed consent before participating in this study.

Data Availability Statement

Access to the dataset is not possible due to ethical approval restrictions.

References

Akkermans, J., Donald, W.E., Jackson, D. and Forrier, A. (2024), "Are we talking about the same thing? The case for stronger connections between graduate and worker employability research. *Career Development International*, Vol. 29 No. 1, pp.80–92.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-08-2023-0278>

Barkhuizen, G. (2014), "Revisiting narrative frames: An instrument for investigating language teaching and learning", *System*, Vol 47, pp.12–27.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.09.014>

Barkhuizen, G. and Wetter, R. (2008), "Narrative frames for investigating the experiences of language teachers", *System*, Vol. 36 No. 3, pp.372–387.

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

Baruch, Y. (2015), “Organizational and labor market as career eco-system”, De Vos, A. and Van der Heijden, B.I.J.M. (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, pp.164–180.

Baruch, Y., Ashleigh, M.J. and Donald, W.E. (2023), “A sustainable career ecosystem perspective of talent flow and acquisition: The interface between higher education and industry”, Donald, W. E. (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Career Ecosystems for University Students and Graduates*, IGI Global Pennsylvania, pp.177–194.
<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7442-6.ch010>

Baruch, Y. and Rousseau, D.M. (2019), “Integrating psychological contracts and ecosystems in career studies and management”, *Academy of Management Annals*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp.84-111. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0103>

Clarke, M. (2018), “Rethinking graduate employability: The role of capital, individual attributes and context”, *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 43 No. 11, pp.1923-1937.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1294152>

Cole, D. and Donald, W.E. (2022), “Shifting the narrative: Towards a more holistic approach to learning. *GiLE Journal of Skills Development*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp.3–4.
<https://doi.org/10.52398/gjsd.2022.v2.i1.pp3-4>

De Vos, A., Van der Heijden, B.I.J.M. and Akkermans, J. (2020), “Sustainable careers: Towards a conceptual model”, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 117, 103196.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.06.011>

Donald, W.E. (2023). (Ed.). *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Career Ecosystems for University Students and Graduates*, IGI Global, Pennsylvania.
<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7442-6>

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

1
2
3 Donald, W.E. and Jackson, D. (2022), “Subjective wellbeing among university students and
4 recent graduates: Evidence from the United Kingdom”, *International Journal of*
5
6 *Environmental Research and Public Health*, Vol. 19 No. 11, 6911.

7
8
9
10 <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19116911>

11
12 Donald, W.E., Baruch, Y. and Ashleigh, M.J. (2019), “The undergraduate self-perception of
13 employability: human capital, careers advice and ownership”, *Studies in Higher Education*,
14
15 Vol. 44 No. 4, pp. 599–614. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1387107>

16
17
18 Donald, W.E., Baruch, Y. and Ashleigh, M.J. (2024), “Construction and operationalisation of an
19 Employability Capital Growth Model (ECGM) via a systematic literature review (2016-
20
21 2022)”, *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 49 No. 1, pp.1–15.

22
23
24
25
26 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2023.2219270>

27
28 Education New Zealand. (2023), *The Insight Story – Issue 7*.

29
30
31 <https://intellilab.enz.govt.nz/document/715-20231005-insights-story-issue-7>

32
33 Fletcher, T. (2023), “Using a virtual learning environment to enhance reflective practice in work-
34 based learning”, *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, Vol. 13 No. 6,
35
36 pp.1339-1353. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-10-2020-0231>

37
38
39 Geertz, C. (1973), *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*, Basic Books, New York, NY.

40
41
42 Holmes, L. (2013), “Competing perspectives on graduate employability: possession, position or
43 process?”, *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp.538–554.

44
45
46
47 <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.587140>

48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
60 Hou, M. (2023), “AsianCrit lens on Chinese international student multi-dimensional transitions
and experiences in the US”, *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, Vol. 13
No. 3, pp.488–501. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-12-2022-0286>

Iansiti, M. and Levien, R. (2004), “Strategy as ecology”, *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 82
No. 3, pp.68–81.

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

- 1
2
3 Isopahkala-Bouret, U., Tholen, G. and Van Zanten, A. (2023), “Introduction to the special issue:
4
5 positionality and social inequality in graduate careers”, *Journal of Education and Work*,
6
7 Vol. 36 No. 1, pp.1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2023.2169995>
8
9
- 10 Jackson, D. (2016), “Reconceptualising graduate employability: The importance of pre-
11
12 professional identity”, *Higher Education, Research & Development*, Vol. 35 No. 5,
13
14 pp.925–939. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2016.1139551>
15
16
- 17 Jones, R.H. (2012), *Discourse Analysis*. Routledge, Oxford, UK.
18
- 19 Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991), *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*,
20
21 Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
22
23
- 24 Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M. and Saldaña, J. (2014), *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods*
25
26 *Sourcebook*, 3rd Edition, SAGE, London.
27
28
- 29 Nikou, S. and Luukkonen, M. (2024), “The push-pull factor model and its implications for the
30
31 retention of international students in the host country”, *Higher Education, Skills and Work-*
32
33 *Based Learning*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp.76–94.
34
35 <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-04-2023-0084>
36
37
- 38 Nimmi, P.M., Joseph, G. and Donald, W.E. (2022), “Is it all about perception? A sustainability
39
40 viewpoint on psychological capital and life wellbeing of management graduates”, *Higher*
41
42 *Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp.384–398.
43
44 <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-01-2021-0004>
45
46
- 47 Nimmi, P.M., Kuriakose, V., Donald, W.E. and Nowfal, M. (2021), “HERO Elements of
48
49 Psychological Capital: Fostering Career Sustainability via Resource Caravans”, *Australian*
50
51 *Journal of Career Development*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp.199–210.
52
53 <https://doi.org/10.1177/10384162211066378>
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

1
2
3 Nottingham, P.M. and Mao, Y. (2023), “Understanding the role of learning communities of
4
5 practice within a degree apprenticeship to enhance inclusive engagement”, *Higher*
6
7 *Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, Vol. 13 No. 5, pp.1009–1022.

8
9
10 <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-02-2023-0041>

11
12 New Zealand Productivity Commission. (2021), *Impacts of Immigration on the Labour Market*
13
14 *and Productivity*. [https://www.productivity.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Impacts-of-](https://www.productivity.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Impacts-of-immigration-on-the-labour-market-and-productivity.pdf)
15
16 [immigration-on-the-labour-market-and-productivity.pdf](https://www.productivity.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Impacts-of-immigration-on-the-labour-market-and-productivity.pdf)

17
18
19 OECD. (2023), *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*. [https://www.oecd-](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2023_e13bef63-en)
20
21 [ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2023_e13bef63-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2023_e13bef63-en)

22
23
24 Padgett, R.C. and Donald, W.E. (2023), “Preparing graduates for sustainable careers: A case of
25
26 ‘The Global Marketing Professional’ module. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based*
27
28 *Learning*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp.22–35. <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-03-2022-0073>.

29
30
31 Pham, T. (2021), *Navigating the Host Labour Market: International Graduates Need More Than*
32
33 *Credentials*, Centre for Global Higher Education, Department of Education, University of
34
35 Oxford.

36
37
38 Pham, T. (2022), “Communication competencies and international graduates’ employability
39
40 outcomes: Strategies to navigate the host labour market”, *International Migration and*
41
42 *Integration*, Vol. 23, pp.733–749. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00869-3>

43
44
45 Phillippi, J. and Lauderdale, J. (2018), “A guide to field notes for qualitative research: Context
46
47 and conversation”, *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 28 No. 3, pp.381–388.
48
49 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317697102>

50
51
52 Pudyanti, R.A.A.A. and Pham, T. (2023), “A New Framework for Preparing Indonesian
53
54 Graduates for Employability: A Capitals-Based Approach”, Donald, W. E. (Ed.) *Handbook*
55
56 *of Research on Sustainable Career Ecosystems for University Students and Graduates*, IGI
57
58 Global, Pennsylvania, pp.116–135. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7442-6.ch007>

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

1
2
3 Quigley, N.R., Broussard, K.A., Boyer, T.M., Fishman, S.M., Comolli, N.K., Grannas, A.M.,
4
5 Smith, A.R., Nance, T.A., Svenson, E.M. and Vickers, K. (2023), “Differentiated career
6
7 ecosystems: Toward understanding underrepresentation and amelioration disparities in
8
9 STEM”, *Human Resource Management Review*.

10
11
12 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2023.101002>

13
14
15 Rogers, S. (2023), *International Student Tuition Fees*. Complete University Guide.

16
17 <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/finance/international->
18
19 [student-tuition-fees](https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/finance/international-)

20
21
22 Soltani, B. (2018), “Academic socialization as the production and negotiation of social space”,

23
24 *Linguistics and Education*, Vol. 45, pp.20–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2018.03.003>

25
26
27 Soltani, B. (2021a), “International students’ socialization and transition experiences in high
28
29 school”, Pham, T. and Soltani, B. (Eds.), *Enhancing student education transitions and*
30
31 *employability: From theory to practice*, Routledge, New York, pp.49–68.

32
33
34 Soltani, B. (2021b), “Transitioning to vocational education: An investigation in experiences of
35
36 international students”, Pham, T. and Soltani, B. (Eds.), *Enhancing student education*
37
38 *transitions and employability: From theory to practice*, Routledge, New York,
39
40 pp.88–1058.

41
42
43 Soltani, B. and Loret, J.P. (2018), “Developing capabilities at a New Zealand tertiary institution:
44
45 From foreign leaders to socialized international students”, *Scope*, Vol. 5, pp.47–51.

46
47
48 Soltani, B. and Tran, L. (2021), “From imagined community to imagined social space: The case
49
50 of three international students”, *Transitions: Journal of Transient Migration*, Vol. 5 No. 2,
51
52 pp.123–143. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3164>

53
54
55 Soltani, B. and Tran, L. (2023), “Examining space, silence, and agency in language socialization
56
57 of an international student in the EAP and mainstream courses”, *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 57
58
59 No. 2, pp.480–510. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3164>

LANDSCAPE OF PRACTICE

- 1
2
3 Soltani, B., Tran, L. and Reza, A. (2022), “Being and becoming an international student: The
4
5 inter-relation between language and socialization of identities”, *Education and Linguistics*,
6
7 Vol. 1 No. 2, pp.238–266. <https://doi.org/10.1515/edulinq-2022-0004>
8
9
- 10 Soltani, B. and Zhang, L.J. (2023), “International students’ language socialization in an English-
11
12 medium university: A socio-spatial lens”, *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, Vol.
13
14 46 No. 3, pp.3316–338. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aral.21035.sal>
15
16
- 17 Suleman, F., Videira, P. and Araújo, E.R. (2023), “Tackling regional skill shortages: from single
18
19 employer strategies to local partnerships”, *Journal of Vocational Education &*
20
21 *Training*, Vol. 75 No. 3, pp.607–626. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2021.1931945>
22
23
- 24 Tomlinson, M. (2017), “Forms of graduate capital and their relationship to graduate
25
26 employability”, *Education+ Training*, Vol. 59, pp.338–352.
27
28 <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-05-2016-0090>
29
30
- 31 Universities UK. (2023), *International Students Boost UK Economy by £41.9 billion*.
32
33 <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/latest/news/international-students-boost-uk-economy>
34
35
- 36 Van der Heijden, B.I.J.M. (2005), “No one has ever promised you a rose garden” *On shared*
37
38 *responsibility and employability enhancing strategies throughout careers*. Heerlen, Open
39
40 University of the Netherlands/Assen.
41
- 42 Van der Heijden, B.I.J.M. and De Vos, A. (2015), “Sustainable careers: Introductory chapter”,
43
44 De Vos, A. and Van der Heijden, B.I.J.M. (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Sustainable*
45
46 *Careers*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, pp.1–19.
47
48
- 49 Wenger, E. (2010), “Communities of practice and social learning systems: The career of a
50
51 concept”, Blackmore, C. (Ed.), *Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice*,
52
53 Springer, Singapore, pp.179–198.
54
55
56
57
58
59
60