

# Another Model of Employability? Considering the RAW Framework

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Presented at the 26th Association for Psychological Sciences Annual Convention,  
San Francisco, CA, May 23, 2014

## Abstract

*In 2013, Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic, and Kaiser presented the Rewarding, Ability, and Willingness (RAW) framework to conceptualize the construct of employability. Our review of previous research indicates that though the RAW construct borrows heavily from others, it offers a unique perspective for categorizing existing research as well as guiding future research.*

### Another Model of Employability? Considering the RAW Framework

The subject of ‘employability’ has only been an area of interest since the tail end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, thus making it a fairly new realm for researchers to explore. Originating just over 20 years ago as policy within the United Kingdom, responsibility was put on the individual to gain and maintain employment. The overall goal was to focus development on generic skills and individual flexibility, which would mobilize the workforce, especially those who have historically been underemployed (Haasler, 2013). In the same decade, employability popped up in Germany in response to reductions in the social safety net of the welfare state; the federal government pass an act that promoted self-employment and entrepreneurship was well as an emphasis placed on providing skillsets that were in demand by employers (Haasler, 2013). Since the appearance of a focus on employability in Europe in the 1990s, the majority of research in this arena has largely remained in Europe; the research has centered around models in higher education (Jameson, Strudwick, Bond-Taylor, & Kaiser, 2012; Stoner & Milner, 2010; Yorke & Knight 2006). Research in the United States on

‘employability’ has mainly focused on populations with substance abuse problems (Wetzler, 2010), mental illnesses (Harvey, Heaton, Carpenter, Green, Gold, & Shoenbaum, 2012), and physical disabilities (Bricout & Bentley; Dalgin & Bellini, 2008), leaving much to be explored.

In 2013, Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic, and Kaiser presented a new framework to conceptualize the construct of ‘employability’. Their framework uses the acronym RAW, in which R represents ‘Rewarding’ (being rewarding to work with), A represents ‘Ability’ (the capability of learning and doing the job), and W represents ‘Willingness’ (an individual’s motivation to do the job). Thus, they define employability as “the ability to gain and maintain a job in a formal organization” (p. 3). In light of some recent calls for reducing, rather than expanding, the number of constructs in organizational behavior, we searched the literature using the key term ‘employability’. Our overarching purpose was to determine if the RAW framework provides a fresh viewpoint on employability. In this article, we offer the existing definitions in the literature for ‘employability’, compared with the RAW framework, and finally, share an initial conclusion with regard to the merits of the RAW framework.

In previous research, Rothwell, Jewel, and Hardie (2009) defined 'employability' as: "the perceived ability to attain sustainable employment appropriate to one's qualification level" (p. 154) and offered up a model encompassing self-belief, the individual's perceptions of his or her university and field of study, along with the external labor market. This framework is unique because it takes the external labor market into consideration whereas past research has mainly focused on internal or individual factors.

Researching what employers are looking for in an employee, Yorke and Knight (2006) adopted a definition of 'employability' as: "a set of achievements, skills, understanding, and personal attitudes that make grads more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations" (p. 567). Their framework, called the "USEM account", included: understanding, skillful knowledge, efficacy, and metacognition as the keys to employability (Yorke and Knight, 2003). This model stressed the interrelatedness of the components in the achievement of employability. In this model, understanding and efficacy correspond to Hogan et al.'s rewarding and 'willingness' dimensions and skills relate to the RAW model's 'ability' dimension. Metacognition is original in this framework, stressing the importance of the awareness of one's own learning processes.

Offered as a training tool, Pool and Sewell (2007) defined employability as "having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful" (p. 280). This model's base components are an overlapping framework, with an acronym of CareerEDGE, consisting of: Career development learning; Experience, work and life; Degree of subject knowledge, understanding and skills; Generic skills; and Emotional intelligence. Pool and Sewell suggest the interaction and individual's awareness of these components leads to a heightened sense of self which leads to increased employability. Numerous areas are overlapping with the RAW model, mainly across the 'willingness' and 'ability' areas (e.g. degree of subject knowledge, understanding and skills; generic skills; and experience), with some

overlapping of 'rewarding' reflected in Pool and Sewell's emotional intelligence component. This model is unique in that it claims that employability is essential to reevaluate over one's lifetime and should not just be a focus of an education system.

Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006) defined 'employability' as: "the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competencies" (p. 453). A key construct within their model of employability is "Occupational Expertise", which consists of the human factor (cf., 'ability' in the RAW model), and four other "General Competencies," three of which overlap with RAW model elements: (1) anticipation and optimization, to prepare for work changes ('willingness' in the RAW model); (2) adaptability ('ability' in the RAW model); and (3) corporate sense, performing as a member of a team reflecting ('rewarding'). The uniqueness in this model exists in the ability to balance employee versus employer interests.

Even earlier, Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004) defined employability as: "a form of work specific (pro)active adaptability" that includes three dimensions: career identity, personal adaptability, and social and human capital" (p. 32). Using these elements as the foundation, they constructed a psycho-social model of employability which included several "person-centered" traits of an individual. Here again, we find a model with similar classifications as in Hogan, et al.'s RAW construct, where 'rewarding' parallels social capital, and 'ability' corresponds to human capital and adaptability. Later, Fugate and Kinicki (2008) added a dispositional component to employability, analogous to 'willingness' in the model presented by Hogan, et al.

See Table 1 for a comparison of these employability constructs.

### Summary

In summary, several researchers have contributed to identifying the factors underlying employability (Fugate, et al., 2004; Pool and Sewell, 2007; Rothwell, et al., 2009; Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden, 2006; Yorke and Knight, 2002). A critical comparison of these earlier conceptualizations with RAW suggests

that Hogan et al., have streamlined the concepts of previous research without losing too much of the complexity inherent in a multifaceted construct of employability. Given the plight of the long term unemployed and the importance of vocational preparation, the RAW framework shows considerable promise for integrating past research and guiding future research.

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Table 1.

Comparison of employability constructs

Authors	Construct Definition	Commonalities	Unique Features (in Bold below)
Hogan, et al. (2013)	Construct: <b>RAW</b> Def: The ability to gain and maintain a job in a formal organization. (p. 3)	Integration and streamlining of research listed below into the RAW framework	Introduction of a compensatory model of employability based on what employers want versus what psychologists have typically studied.
Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006)	Construct: <b>Employability – Competence-Based Approach</b> Def: The continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences. (p. 453)	Corporate Sense (R) Occupational Expertise (A) Anticipation and Optimization & Personal Flexibility (W)	Introduction of a <b>multidimensional measurement instrument</b> for their model of employability consisting of five dimensions: Occupational Expertise, Anticipation and Optimization, Personal Flexibility, Corporate Sense, and Balance. Uniqueness is added with <b>Balance</b> of employee’s and employer’s opposing interests.
Yorke & Knight (2006)	Construct: <b>USEM</b> Def: A set of achievements, skills, understanding and personal attitudes that make grads more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy . (p. 567)	Understanding and Skills (A) Efficacy beliefs (W)	Employability is increased with the interrelatedness of Understanding (knowledge), Skillful practices, Efficacy beliefs and <b>Metacognition</b> (USEM account). Proposed a model for increasing employability of graduate students.
Fugate, et al. (2004)	Construct: <b>Employability – Psycho-Social Approach</b> Def: A multidimensional aggregate of career identity”, personal adaptability, and social and human capital. (p. 32)	Human Capital (A) Career Identity (W)	Expanding on previous person-centered research, Fugate, et al. integrated factors pertaining to an individual’s dispositions and behaviors including <b>adaptability and proactivity</b> along with career identity as a motivator of an individual's active and adaptive behavior. <b>Social capital</b> is also unique which gives importance to an individual’s social network.