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Employability Skills Element's: Difference Perspective Between Teaching staff and Employers Industrial in Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify various elements of employability skills that are integrated into the agricultural vocational education programs in Malaysia and their importance to employers in industry. The sample consisted of one hundred and thirty (130) teaching staff from vocational agricultural institutions and one hundred and fifty two (152) agricultural employers representing the industry. The study found that the five mean elements of employability skills which were always integrated by the teaching staff of agricultural vocational training institutions during the teaching process were: “cooperating with others”, “working in a team”, “possessing honesty”, “following instructions given”, and “interacting with others”. Five mean important elements of employability skills needed by employers in the industry were: “possessing, cooperating with others”, “using technology instrument and information systems effectively”, “making decisions”, and “managing times”. Three main constraints that the teaching staff of agricultural vocational training institutions have to face in order to integrate the elements of the employability skills are: “did not clearly understand the term of employability skills”, “Curriculum designed not emphasized on employability skills”, and “No evaluation of employability”.

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1. Introduction

1.1. What are employability skills

There are a variety of interpretations for the term of employability. It can be viewed as a characteristic of an individual (Zegward & Hodges, 2003). It also related to personal attributes rather than technical skills (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). It is sometimes referring to generic capabilities, transferable skills, basic skill, essential skills, work skills, soft skill, core competencies and enabling skills or even key skills. These nontechnical skills have played an important role for a graduate in getting employed and doing well in the workplace. (Dodridge, 1999). Lankard (1990)

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also defined Employability as a person who hold a feature of Good Self-Image, Good Interpersonal Skills, and Good Attitude.

Robinson (2000), stated employability skills as “those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. Buck and Barrick (1987), defined employability skills are the attributes of employees, other than technical competence, that make them an asset to the employer. These employability skills include reading, basic arithmetic and other basic skills; problem solving, decision making, and other higher-order thinking skills; and dependability, a positive attitude, cooperativeness, and other affective skills and traits.” Kearns (2001) has defined generic skills as ‘the skills which can be used across a large number of different occupations. They include the key competencies or key skills but extend beyond these to include a range of other cognitive, personal and interpersonal skills which are relevant to employability’.

Gainer (2002) has summarized out a set of skills that will give a competence to addressed as Employable, they are: Communication Skills, Interactional Skills, Computer Skills, Civilization Skills, Ethics, Personal Management, Vocational Mature, Problem Solving Skills, and Career Development Skills . Overtoom (2000) define “Employability skills are transferable core skill group that represent essential require by the 21st century workplace. They are necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education. Employability being explained as a terminology used to define skills and quality candidate posed when undertake vacancies offer by companies.

1.2. Type of employability needed by industry

Today’s market has a steady stream towards globalization and diversification. Industries today are looking forward technical expertise or “hard skills”, at the same time they are counting candidates “employability skills” or “soft skills”. Baxter and Young, (2000) stated that most of the employers are looking for candidates who posed sufficient Employability skills like Positive Thinking, Efficient Expertise, Good Problem Solving Skills, Good Decision Making Skills, Good Socialization, Good Interpersonal Skills, and Effective leadership.

According to the increased in competition among organizations in the global market, employer need to have employees with good problem solving skills that enables them to identify, and resolve business problems. It would be an added value to the company by having employees with entrepreneurship skills such as ability to think critically, analyze situations and to be able to identify business opportunity.(Mohd. Sahandri Gani & Saifuddin Kumar, 2009). Employability skills need to be embedded not only in one module but also throughout the curriculum at all levels (Hind et al., 2007). Employers nowadays were looking forward for capable employees that can posed basic employment knowledge which will save some amount of training and orientation fees. In detailed, they are recruiting graduates that can attached themselves for proper academic knowledge and well trained „soft skills” that promise these graduates will return the highest quality of contribution. (Hasliza, 2003)

1.3 The importance of employability skills

Employability skills are important to enable graduates to function in today’s changing world. Graduates need to be flexible and adaptable, to be able to solve problems, communicate effectively, think critically and creatively, and be able to operate as effective team members in the workplace (Elias Salleh et.al., 2004). In order for business to be successful, employees not only need to have technical knowledge and skills but also posses soft skills. The failure to fulfil this requirement has been identified as one of the causes of the skills gap amongst graduates (Bradshaw, 1989, Keep & Mayhew, 1999)

2. Research Objectives

This research is to identify elements for Employability Skills integrated by the teaching staff of agricultural vocational training institutions and the elements of employability skills needed by the employer in the industry Besides, this research pointed out the constrain for teaching staff in agricultural institution to integrate the elements of employability skills during teaching and learning process.

3. Methodology and data analysis

A descriptive method was used in this study, where samples were divided into two groups that is teaching staff in agricultural institution and employers industry in Malaysia. There are total numbers of 130 teaching staff in agricultural institutions and 152 employer industry have been involved in this study. Data was analyzed by using the descriptive method, which involves frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

4. Result

Table I. Ranking elements of employability skills which were always integrated by the teaching staff of agricultural vocational training institutions

No.Item	Elements of Employability Skills	Mean	Rank
42	cooperating with others	4.32	1
39	working in a team	4.22	2
22	possessing honesty	4.21	3
1	following instructions given	4.18	4
41	interacting with others	3.97	5
26	acting positively toward change	3.96	6
11	Solving problems	3.88	7
32	managing time	3.86	8
4	Giving clear explanations	3.85	9
27	possessing self appreciation	3.84	10

Table II. Ranking elements employability skills needed by employer in the industry

No.Item	Elements of Employability Skills	Mean	Rank
22	possessing honesty	4.87	1
42	cooperating with others	4.77	2
8	using technology instrument and information system effectively	4.77	3
14	making decisions	4.72	4
32	managing time	4.66	5
7	making decisions	4.62	6
28	managing times	4.62	7
35	creative	4.60	8
39	work in a team	4.59	9
26	Acting positively toward change	4.59	10

Table III Ranking constraints that the teaching staff agricultural vocational training institutions have to face in order to integrate the elements of the employability skills

No.Item	Elements of Employability Skills	Mean	Rank
6	Did not clearly understand the term of employability skills	4.05	1
2	Curriculum designed not emphasised on Employability Skills	4.02	2
5	No evaluation of employability	3.98	3
3	Unavailability of guidelines to integrate element of employability skills	3.91	4
7	Do not know the importance element of employability skills	3.90	5

8	Not being expose to elements of Employability Skills	3.88	6
1	No contents of Employability Skills included in syllabus	3.86	7
4	Unavailability of specify instruction to integrate element of employability in teaching process	3.84	8
9	Unavailability specify syllabus to integrate element of employability skills in learning process	3.74	9
10	Not enough time to integrate element of employability skills in learning process	3.64	10

5. Discussion

Analysis result found that teaching staff in agricultural institution agreed that they have integrated elements of Employability Skills during teaching and learning process. From the selected 20 elements of employability skills, and base on top five ranks by the teaching staff in agricultural institution accordingly are, first “cooperating with others” (4.32); secondly were “working in a team” (4.22); third were “possessing honesty” (4.21); fort were “followings instructions given” (4.18); and lastly “were interacting with other” (3.97).

Elements employability skills that needed and perceive importance by the employers industry were, “possessing honesty” (4.87); followed by “cooperating with others” (4.77); third were “using technology instrument and information system effectively” (4.77); fort ware “making decisions” (4.72); and lastly “managing time” (4.66).

For constrain faced by the teaching staff in agricultural industry institution in integrating elements of Employability Skills during teaching and learning process, there were five major challenges base on rank from ten item. Firstly were “Did not clearly understand the term of employability skills (4.05); follow by, “No specified measurements to integrate Employability Skills in class” (4.02); No evaluation of employability” (3.98); “Unavailability of guidelines to integrate element of employability skills” (3.91); and lastly “Do not know the importance element of employability skills” (3.90).

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, employability skills have become, an important issue in the job market, for the students, learning providers, and the industries. This paper has outline the rank of the importance of employability skills for the students and has been integrate in teaching and learning process in the classroom by the teaching staff in agricultural institution. It also view of the element employability skills needed by the employers industry in Malaysia. Lastly this paper highlight ranks five constrain face by the teaching staff in agricultural institution during integrate employability skills in the classroom.

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