INCULCATING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR TECHNICAL STUDENTS OF THE MANUFACTURING PROGRAMME

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Abstract

Employability skills are one of the soft skills which are as important as technical skills and should be acquired by an employee in the industrial sector today. Unfortunately not all employees today acquired employability skills that are expected by the employer. This study was carried out to identify aspects of the employability skills and its relationship with the requirement of the employer in the manufacturing industries. Sample for the research consists of 107 employers from manufacturing industry and this study was done to companies in the manufacturing industry and grouped into three which were type of industry, company size and ownership status. Analysis of the survey, managed to determine important aspects of the employability skills needed by employers in the manufacturing industries. The skills were ranked and results showed that all seven of the employability were considered important by Malaysian manufacturing industry. Basic skill, thinking skill, sources skill, resources skill, system and technology skill and personal qualities were ranked most important whereas informational skill was considered moderately important.

Keywords: employability skills, manufacturing industry, employers, employees, technical graduates.

1 INTRODUCTION

Economic transformation entering the industrialization era in Malaysia is happening fast. This development shows that its industries are progressing very fast and becoming more technologically advanced. Thus, Malaysia needs more experts in the industrial work force to fulfill the needs and requirement of the industries. Malaysia's First Industrial Master Plan reported that 2.4 % of the labor force in the manufacturing sector consisted of 12,000 engineers and technician. This is approximately 6-8 % lower compared to progressing country [4]. He also stated that low supply of engineers and technicians have a big impact to industrialized the nation in which it will cause low absorption of technological product ability. This will result in the technological indigenization to be slow and the dependency to foreign expatriates for technological support will continue.

According to La Belle [3], the human capital model views an economic role of education in which individuals pursue the necessary knowledge and skills in order to manage the various aspects of economy and to facilitate its growth through the use of modern technology. In both industrial and developing countries, higher levels of education increase the chances an individual will be employed.

The Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia (MOHE) is targeting to produce competent graduates to fulfill national and international manpower in their relevant fields within six months of their graduation. This is the fourth objective of MOHE. Meanwhile results from 2008 tracer study done by MOHE [12], out of 13,002 first degree technical graduates, 35.5% (4,616) were unemployed. Meanwhile out of 5,515 diploma technical graduates, 25.9% (1,428) were unemployed.

Employability skill is a non-technical ability and is part of the work skills which is as important as technical skill and should be acquired by everybody in the industrial field. Industrial employer agrees that employability skill is important to be acquired by their employees to be outstanding in their field [10]. This statement is supported by Ramlee [7] who found that through his research, technical graduates in Malaysia has mastered their technical skill but employers feel dissatisfied of their employees because they lack motivational skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, problem solving and entrepreneurship skill. These are part of the employability skills.

Syed Hussain [11] in his study found that technical graduates cannot fulfill the needs and requirements of employer because the technical curriculum used was designed to prepare the