Employability Skills Assessment Tool Development

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Abstract

Research nationally and internationally found that technical graduates are lacking in employability skills. As employability skills are crucial in outcome-based education, the main goal of this research is to develop an Employability Skill Assessment Tool to help students and lecturers produce competent graduates in employability skills needed by the industry. The employability skill Assessment Tool were developed using the Kepner-Tregoe (K-T) method. Samples were 107 employers from five types of Malaysian manufacturing industries. The findings showed that employers agreed on the importance for all seven of the employability skills; interpersonal skills, thinking skills, personal qualities/values, resource skills, system & technology skills, basic skills and informational skills. These skills were ranked and chosen as items for the Employability skills assessment tool. The tool developed was tested and validated by manufacturing employers and lecturers in institutions. The agreement coefficient was found to be between substantial agreement and almost perfect agreement.

Keywords: employability skill, employability skill assessment tool, weight factor

1. Introduction

Technology is going through rapid changes that require a more skilled workforce to fulfill the needs and requirements of industry (Taylor, 2005). There is gap between graduate attributes not only their employment readiness but also their employability skills (Freudenberg et al., 2011).

Employability skill is often debated with various interpretations biased toward stating that employability skill is a preparation for graduates to successfully get jobs and to develop in their careers. Employees with employability skills and competent in technical skills are considered an asset to employer. The human capital theory states that through social psychology perspective, “employability” is not only about shaping talent, techniques, and experience for an individual to get a job, but more toward the ability to do the work. The main goal is the critical ability, reflective to convince and upgrade an individual with the skill other than his special or technical skill (Buck and Barrick, 1987; Lankard, 1995; Saterfield et al., 1995; Fugate et al., 2004; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007).

In term of competence development, competence is define as the ability of a person to handle and cope or complete a task or job successfully. This capacity covers the perceptual motor skills cognitive factors, affective factors, personality traits and social skills (Ellström &Kock, 2008). Using this definition as a point of departure, the notion of qualification may now be defined as employability skills that are required by the employer.

1.1 Employability Skills Issues

Findings from Ramlee (2002) on the role of vocational and technical education in the industrialization of Malaysia from the perception of educators and employers states that technical graduates in Malaysia has mastered their technical skills. Employers however felt dissatisfied because their employees lacked motivational skills, communication skills, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, problem solving and entrepreneurship skills.

Syed Hussain (2005) found that 62.3% of graduates in the technical field are still jobless because they lack employability skills rather than technical skills required by the industry. Research done by Mohamed Rashid (2005) on polytechnic graduates also found that about 50.5% of technical graduates of Polytechnic are jobless