PARTICIPATION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINEES IN A SUPERVISED WORK EXPERIENCE AND THE ACQUISITION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

SHARIFAH KAMALIAH SYED SOFIAN

FPP 2008 12
PARTICIPATION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINEES IN A SUPERVISED WORK EXPERIENCE AND THE ACQUISITION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

By

SHARIFAH KAMALIAH SYED SOFIAN

Thesis submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

May 2008
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my three lovely daughters; Nuha Nadiah, Nur Hannani and Imtiaz Amani, please remember this…

Today’s impossibility becomes tomorrow’s reality when human efforts are fueled by enthusiasm and passion.
PARTICIPATION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINEES IN A SUPERVISED WORK EXPERIENCE AND THE ACQUISITION OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

By

SHARIFAH KAMALIAH SYED SOFIAN

May 2008

Chairman:  Professor Ab. Rahim Bakar, PhD

Faculty:  Educational Studies

The purpose of the study was to compare vocational trainees participating and not participating in a supervised work experience on the acquisition of employability skills. The population of the study was vocational trainees who had completed vocational programmes in various fields. They were compared on the basis of whether they had participated in a supervised work experience on the acquisition of employability skills. An equal-sized groups stratified sampling was administered as it was considered useful if one wants to compare the performance of different subgroups, besides, Cohen (1988) prescribed the desirability of equal-sized samples as it can be demonstrated that equal division yields greater power than unequal division does. The process of power analysis determined the sample size. The number of sample was 138. Items
comprising the translated version of SCANS foundation skills and work competencies measured acquisition of employability. The consent to use the translated version in the Malay language was officially given by the Planning and Research Unit of the Technical Department, Ministry of Education of Malaysia. The researcher developed items comprising the background characteristics of respondents based on appropriate literature. The dimensions of self-concept and achievement motivation were adopted from a study by Ab. Rahim (2001). The result showed that participating students achieved a moderately higher level of employability skills compared to students not participating in the supervised work experience. A significant difference in the acquisition of employability skills between participants and non-participants of the supervised work experience was observed at (t = 2.3, p < .05), although the magnitude of the differences in the means was moderately small (eta squared = .04). This result could be regarded as material with the said magnitude as it has the potential of changing the way others think about the phenomenon of having a supervised work experience as a feasible mode in nurturing such skills. Study indicated there were also other factors attributing to the acquisition of employability skills, and these include gender, age, previous work experience, self concept and achievement motivation. However, achievement motivation was found to be significantly related to the acquisition of employability skills. This psychological variable is also a well-known contributor in the development of entrepreneurial skills leading towards the development of successful entrepreneur. In addition, type of school to work transition was
found to be significantly related to previous work experience and gender. Therefore, participation of vocational trainees in a supervised work experience influences the acquisition of employability skills, an important psychosocial construct. Evidently, employability skills also identified as career success skills could facilitate youth in negotiating from school to work transition as employers seek potential employees nurtured with such skills.
Abstrak tesis dibentang kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi syarat untuk memperolehi ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENGLIBATAN PELATIH VOKASIONAL DALAM PENGALAMAN BEKERJA SECARA TERANCANG DAN PENERAPAN KEMAHIRAN KEPEKERJAAN**

Oleh

**SHARIFAH KAMALIAH SYED SOFIAN**

Mei 2008

Pengerusi:  Professor Ab. Rahim Bakar, PhD

Fakulti:  Pengajian Pendidikan

Kajian ini memperihalkan penglibatan pelatih vokasional dalam pengalaman bekerja secara terancang mempengaruhi pembentukan kemahiran kepekerjaan. Kemahiran kepekerjaan, satu konstruk psikososial yang penting, dikenali juga sebagai kemahiran kejayaan dalam kerjaya. Di antara peranan penting yang dimainkan oleh kemahiran kepekerjaan termasuk; mempermudah proses transisi dari sekolah ke alam kerjaya, disamping itu majikan menghendaki bakal pekerja yang mempamirkan kemahiran tersebut. Isu kemahiran kepekerjaan hangat diperdebatkan bersabit pihak yang patut dipertanggungjawab untuk menerapkannya. Bukti jelas menunjukkan bahawa penglibatan yang berterusan di antara pihak majikan dan pendidik perlu diwujudkan. Peranan institusi keluarga, jaringan dan fisikal dipercayai menyumbang terhadap pembentukan
kepekerjaan pada paras t=2.3, p<.05. Walaupun magnitud perbezaan bersaiz kecil pada tahap eta kuasa dua menunjukkan .04, namun keputusan boleh dianggap penting kerana ia mempunyai potensi untuk mempengaruhi persepsi masyarakat terhadap fenomena penglibatan dalam pengalaman bekerja secara terancang sebagai salah satu mod penting untuk penerapan kemahiran kepekerjaan. Dimensi yang tidak kurang pentingnya adalah kedudukan konstruk motivasi pencapaian sebagai satu penentu dalam pembentukan kemahiran kepekerjaan. Konstruk ini merupakan pembolehubah yang sangat penting dalam pembentukan usahawan. Sehubungan itu, model kajian perlu mengambil kira aspek penambahbaikan ini di dalam perancangan kajian masa depan.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the Name of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful

This thesis is an embodiment of an aspiration realized. It signifies a scholastic pursuit undertaken not in isolation but is affected by influences beyond the work itself. It denotes career as an intersection between the interest of the researcher and the context in which the research is embedded. Among the many ‘significant others’ to have impacted the crafting of the work includes my PhD supervisory committee comprising of Professor Dr. Othman Dato’ Hj Mohamed, Dr. Samsilah Roslan and headed by Professor Dr. Ab. Rahim Bakar. The committee had exercised high degree of professionalism in addressing the researcher’s split dream and turning it into fruition. My appreciation goes to the Ministry of Education and the Public Services Department of Malaysia for providing the opportunity to enhance my career development. I wish to extend my thanks to officials from the Ministry of Youth and Sport, Malaysia for making data administration possible. Colleagues at the workplace were morally supportive of my work. My love and affection go to members of my family; my parents, Syed Sofian and Tunku Fauziah, in-laws, Hj. Siraj (deceased) and Siti Musliha for having understood my career aspiration. Afandi Siraj, my husband for believing in me and my quest for excellence. My lovely daughters, Nuha Nadiah, Nur Hannani and Imtiaz Amani for having sacrificed precious moments of growing up enabling their mother to pursue this dream. Your untiring support and love energized me and made my quest seemed effortless. Most importantly you gave meaning to my work. THANK YOU SO MUCH.
I certify that an Examination Committee met on 15 May 2008 to conduct the final examination of Sharifah Kamaliah Syed Sofian on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled “Participation of Vocational Trainees in a Supervised Work Experience and the Acquisition of Employability Skills” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Examination Committee were as follows:

**Rahim Md Sail, PhD**  
Professor  
Faculty of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Mohd. Ibrahim b. Nazri, PhD**  
Associate Professor  
Faculty of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

**Zakaria b. Abd. Rahman, PhD**  
Associate Professor  
Faculty of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

**Matt Baker, PhD**  
Professor  
Texas Tech University  
United States of America  
(External Examiner)

**HASANAH MOHD. GHAZALI, PhD**  
Professor and Deputy Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  

Date: 22 July 2008
This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

**Ab. Rahim Bakar, PhD**  
Professor  
Faculty of Educational Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Othman b. Dato’ Hj. Mohamed, PhD**  
Professor  
Faculty of Educational Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

**Samsilah bt. Roslan, PhD**  
Lecturer  
Faculty of Educational Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

________________________

**AINI IDERIS, PhD**  
Professor and Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 14 August 2008
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

______________________________

SHARIFAH KAMALIAH SYED SOFIAN

Date: 16 July 2008
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION FORM</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>xxii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Nature of the study
   - 1.1.1 The acquisition of employability skills
   - 1.1.2 The importance of employability skills in an adaptive transition
   - 1.1.3 Skilled career
   - 1.1.4 Workplace and the acquisition of employability skills
   - 1.1.5 The debilitating effects of participation in work experience
   - 1.1.6 Confounded factors in the acquisition of employability skills

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1.3 Purpose and Objectives of the study

1.4 Hypotheses
   - 1.4.1 Major hypothesis
   - 1.4.2 Alternative or control hypotheses

1.5 Significance of the study

1.6 Definitions of terms

1.7 Limitation of the study

1.8 Delimitation of the study
2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction
  2.1.1 Global economy and the preparation of the new workforce
  2.1.2 Career landscape and beyond
  2.1.3 Global changes and challenges to youths’ career development

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.3 Vocational and technical education at a glance

2.4 Career development theories and school to work transition
  2.4.1 Theories relevant to the study
  2.4.2 The transition model Schlossberg (2004)
  2.4.3 A model of adaptive transition – Blustein (2000)

2.5 Summary and implications

2.6 Studies in school to work transition
  2.6.1 Summary on studies on school to work transition
  2.7 Studies on participation in work experience among youths

2.7.1 Perspectives on work experience
  2.7.2 Workplace and acquisition of employability skills
  2.7.3 Effect of participating in work experience by youths

2.8 Characteristics of post secondary technical and vocational students

2.9 Summary on the participation of students in work experience

2.10 Summary on the relationship between participation in work experience and acquisition of employability skills

2.11 A glimpse of skill training in Malaysia

2.12 Does a blue-collared career exist?

2.13 Studies on employability
  2.13.1 Introduction - the nature of employability
  2.13.2 Perspectives on employability skills

2.14 Summary on studies on the discourse of employability

2.15 Employers’ perspectives on employability skills – the discourse of policy of employability

2.16 Factors associated with acquisition of employability skills – the discourse of practice

2.17 Other factors facilitating acquisition of employability skills
  2.17.1 Gender
  2.17.2 Age
  2.17.3 Previous work experience
  2.17.4 Self-concept
  2.17.5 Achievement motivation
2.18 Analyzing and measuring employability 176
2.19 Identification of research gap 179

3 RESEARCH METHOD 181

3.1 Introduction 181
3.2 The conceptual framework 181
3.3 Design 183
3.4 Population 186
3.5 Sample 189
   3.5.1 Sample size and power analysis 190
3.6 Instrumentation 193
   3.6.1 Dependent variable 193
   3.6.2 Independent variable 197
   3.6.3 Extraneous independent variable 197
3.7 Pilot testing 198
3.8 Data collection 200
3.9 Data analysis 200
3.10 Hypotheses
   3.10.1 Major hypothesis 202
   3.10.2 Controlled hypotheses 203

4 RESULTS 207

4.1 Introduction 207
4.2 The characteristics of vocational trainees 208
   4.2.1 Gender 209
   4.2.2 Age 209
   4.2.3 Parents’ occupation 210
   4.2.4 Vocational programmes undertaken by vocational trainees 212
   4.2.5 Reasons for enrolling into current vocational courses 213
   4.2.6 Previous work experience 215
   4.2.7 Career aspirations of vocational trainees 215
   4.2.8 Type of school to work transition 217
   4.2.9 Perception of vocational trainees participating in a supervised work experience on the quality of the work experience 217
   4.2.10 Reasons for perceiving work experience positively 218
   4.2.11 Reasons for perceiving work experience negatively 219
   4.2.12 Self-concept scores of vocational trainees 221
   4.2.13 Achievement motivation scores of vocational trainees 222
4.3 The acquisition of employability skills among vocational trainees 222
4.3.1 Acquisition of employability skills among vocational trainees participating and not participating in a supervised work experience

4.3.2 Dimensions of employability skills

4.4 Dimensions of employability skills acquired by vocational trainees

4.5 Acquisition of employability skills and types of school to work transition

4.6 Description of the relationships between acquisition of employability skills of vocational trainees and extraneous variables.

4.6.1 Acquisition of employability skills by gender

4.6.2 Acquisition of employability skills by age

4.6.3 Acquisition of employability skills by previous work experience

4.6.4 The relationship between acquisition of employability skills of vocational trainees and self-concept

4.6.5 The relationship between acquisition of employability skills of vocational trainees and achievement motivation

4.6.6 Summary of relationships between acquisition of employability skills and the extraneous independent variables

4.7 Determining the relationship between major independent variables (types of school to work transition) and background variables

4.7.1 The relationship between type of school to work transition and gender

4.7.2 The relationship between type of school to work transition and age

4.7.3 The relationship between type of school to work transition and previous work experience

4.7.4 The relationship between type of school to work transition and self-concept

4.7.5 The relationship between type of school to work transition and achievement motivation

4.8 Summary of relationships between extraneous variables and type of school to work transition

4.9 Controlling for extraneous variable

5 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Rationale and background to the study
5.2 Statement of the problem 256
5.3 Purposes and Objectives 258
5.4 Hypotheses 259
   5.4.1 Major hypothesis 259
   5.4.2 Control hypotheses 259
5.5 Limitations of the study 261
5.6 Research method 261
   5.6.1 Population and sample 261
   5.6.2 Design and Procedures 262
5.7 Data Analysis 264
5.8 Summary of the Findings 265
   5.8.1 To describe vocational trainees on the following characteristics, gender, age, previous work experience, type of school to work transition, self-concept, achievement motivation and acquisition of employability skills. 265
   5.8.2 To compare the level of employability skills acquisition of vocational trainees participating in a supervised work experience programme with trainees not participating in such a programme 271
   5.8.3 To determine the relationships between vocational trainees’ acquisition of employability skills with the following characteristics, gender, age, previous work experience, self-concept and achievement motivation 271
   5.8.4 To determine the relationships between type of school to work transition with the following characteristics, gender, age, previous work experience, self-concept and achievement motivation 272
   5.8.5 Controlling for achievement motivation 274
5.9 Discussion of findings 275
   5.9.1 School to work transition 275
   5.9.2 Participation of vocational trainees in a supervised work experience 278
   5.9.3 The effect of participation in a supervised work experience and the acquisition of employability skills 282
   5.9.4 The acquisition of sub skills within employability skills 285
   5.9.5 Other factors associated with acquisition of employability skills 292
   5.9.6 Achievement motivation and its relationship with acquisition of employability skill 294
5.10 Conclusion 295
5.11 Implications 297
5.12 Recommendation 299
5.13 Recommendation for future research 304

BIBLIOGRAPHY 306
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Developments in work and workplaces</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Competencies: Learning objectives for youth apprenticeship</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>The principles and recommendations for effective/quality work experience</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Enrolment of students in skill training institution in Malaysia:2000</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Career opportunities in relation to skill level, organization type, and labour market structure</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Generic skills schemes by country and over time</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Workplace skills SCANS framework</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>An employability framework (with examples)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Summary of generic skills assessment models</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Profile of participants of a supervised work experience by type of course and gender</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Profile of non-participants of a supervised work experience by type of course and gender</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Profile of vocational trainees</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Profile of participants of work experience</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Profile of non-participants of work experience</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.19 Comparison of means for the acquisition of employability skills between vocational trainees participating and not participating in a supervised work experience

4.20 Acquisition of employability skills by type of school-to-work transition

4.21 Acquisition of employability skills by gender

4.22 Acquisition of employability skills by age group

4.23 Acquisition of employability skills by previous work experience

4.24 The relationship between acquisition of employability skills and self-concept of vocational trainees

4.25 The relationship between acquisition of employability skills and achievement motivation of vocational trainees

4.26 Summary of relationships between acquisition of employability skills and extraneous independent variables

4.27 The relationship between type of school-to-work transition and gender of vocational trainees

4.28 The relationship between type of school-to-work transition and age of vocational trainees

4.29 The relationship between type of school-to-work transition and previous work experience

4.30 The relationship between type of school-to-work transition and self-concept scores

4.31 The relationship between type of school-to-work transition and achievement motivation scores

4.32 Summary of relationships between extraneous variables and type of school-to-work transition

4.33 Analysis of covariance summary table

4.34 Means of school to work transition groups for acquisition of employability skills
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Barker and Kellen’s career development model of developing employability and job readiness</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Schematic diagram of multi-dimensional framework of blue-collar career (Thomas, 1993)</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A model of factors related to acquisition of employability skills of vocational trainees</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>The International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Integrated Computer Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STWOA</td>
<td>School to Work Opportunities Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCANS</td>
<td>Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPM</td>
<td>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysia Certificate of Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPT</td>
<td>Maktab Perguruan Teknik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Grade Point Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSWEP</td>
<td>Learning through School Supervised Work Experience Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCI</td>
<td>Job Characteristics Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEL</td>
<td>National Educational Longitudinal Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMSS</td>
<td>Third International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARA</td>
<td>Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Council of the Indigenous Group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOSS</td>
<td>National Occupational Skills Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDTTS</td>
<td>National Dual Training System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Nature of the study

This study attempted to determine whether participation in a supervised work experience by vocational trainees was a stronger basis for the acquisition of a greater level of employability skills compared to vocational trainees that had not participated in such an experience. According to Wentling and Waight (2001), participation in supervised work experience, an aspect of work-based learning, not only provides students with a sense of career direction, but also sets the stage for subsequent workplace experiences. Students could enter potential workplaces with greater awareness hence adjusting to company’s culture more readily. Through work experience, students come into contacts with real workplaces issues such as the application of various interpersonal skills in addressing workplace problems.

In a related case, designed to understand students’ involvement in an apprenticeship scheme in Australia, Velde and Cooper (2000) discovered that students participated for exposure to greater career options when they were less inclined academically. The scheme provided them with hands-on