

EMPLOYERS' EVALUATION ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN INDUSTRIAL TRAINING: A CASE OF FACULTY OF BUSINESS (FOB) STUDENTS FROM UNIVERSITI SELANGOR

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Abstract

This research paper reports the employers' evaluation on UNISEL's Faculty of Business (FOB) students' performance during Industrial Training. Data was taken from FOB students of 4 bachelor degree programs who attended industrial training for 2 semesters in 2015. Employers from their respective work place were asked to rate the performance of students under the category of interpersonal skills, soft skills and knowledge and technical skills. They were also being evaluated on whether there will be any employment opportunities exist in the workplace for the students to embark their career. The main objective of this research is to focus on the factors influencing FOB's students' performances during industrial training. Apart from assessing the factors influencing the students' performances, the study also recognizes whether the respondents' background is a contributing factor to the students' performance during industrial training. The research also identifies the level of performance for the students during their training as well as looking into whether it correlates with the students' employment opportunities. This research may also be used as a platform to close any gaps that exists in the faculty's course learning outcomes as the employers' requirement on industrial training students are able to be perceived. This will enable the management to use the information obtained to improve on the current standards of teaching which will eventually and hopefully lead to students' employability in the job arena.

Keywords: employers' evaluation, students' performance, industrial training, FOB, UNISEL

1 INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is now at the mid-point in its journey towards Vision 2020 and is transforming to become a developed nation. Technological, globalisation and liberalisation has changed world tremendously and most work needs to operate globally in order to survive in the competition which exists in the world these days. Employers are looking for more flexible and adaptable workforce so that, these young employees can enable their companies to become more flexible and adaptable to changing market needs (Bennett, 2002). In ensuring the further workforce with high ability, graduates are needed to be competent and competitive. Thus, graduate is required to have relevant knowledge and experience, soft skill (*kemahiran insaniah*) with positive attitude before entering into the real working world (*Dasar Latihan Industri Institut Pengajian Tinggi*, 2010). To cater on this matter, Ministry of Education had been introduced the Industrial training program with the ultimate objectives to expose student to the real working world and increase marketability (*Dasar Latihan Industri Institut Pengajian Tinggi*, 2010). Industrial training refers to the students' placement in the

organisation within stipulated duration (*Dasar Latihan Industri Institut Pengajian Tinggi*, 2010). Industrial training also refer to a positive developmental experience for university students and proved with some favorable outcomes as improved ability to secure a career-oriented position and, specialist knowledge, information technology, time management, communication skills and teamwork (Callanan and Benzing, 2004).

Previous research has suggested industrial training is one of the strategies to address the problem of lack of skills necessary for employment, besides that it aims to expose students to the working environment (Ab Rahman, Omar, Kofli, Mat, Osman, & Darus, 2009). Research conducted by Maher and Graves (2008) indicate the level of student's confidence is increase when they embark to the real working environment. Hodges D and Burchell N. (2003) revealed that 79% of employers considered that it was important for graduates entering business roles to have some business work experience prior to completing their tertiary study and they want graduates to be more 'work-ready'. Meanwhile, Callanan G. and Benzing C. (2004) showed

that internship was linked with career-oriented employment and securing career-oriented employment at the time of graduation and also gain a valuable real-world experience. Via industrial training, trainee is able to gain expertise and confidence in the specific area that they expect to target, when they seek permanent jobs (Neuman, 1999). David Alan Sapp and Qin Zhang (2009) indicate that interns tend to meet their industrial supervisors' expectations and Chung-Khain Wye and Yet-Mee Lim (2009) said that the undergraduates are all highly competent in possessing the said personal qualities and skills. Hassan S. et al (2013) conducted a study on company perception on the employability skills possess by engineering students indicates that industrial supervisors agreed that industrial training program is one of the vital contributors to the employability skills. Yusof N. et al (2013) indicate that employers willing to recruit students in future after industrial training. Yusof N. et al (2013) also contends that technical skill is the most skill required which needs improvement. As a result, the implementation of *Dasar Latihan Industri Institut Pengajian Tinggi*, 2010 is to ensure the structure of industrial training meets its objectives. Hence, it is not surprising that industrial training is obligatory, or at least encouraged, in many university and college curriculums.

With the above in mind, the research was conducted to obtain the overview of employers' evaluation towards UNISEL students who undergo 12 weeks of industrial training at their respective workplace after the completion of their coursework. The sample of the study is students from Faculty of Business (FOB) UNISEL. The mission of FOB is to develop forward-thinking management graduates that meet industrial needs, to create solid partnership with the industry by sharing breakthrough ideas and technologies that meet industrial society and to optimize the holistic well-being of the stakeholders. There are five programs involved in this study and they are Bachelor of Finance (BOF), Bachelor of Marketing (BOM), Bachelor of Business Management (BBM), Bachelor of Human Resources (BHRM) and Bachelor in Industrial Management (BIM). The samples were taken from these students who went for their industrial training for the semester of January 2015 and May 2015. Upon completion of the term, employers were given an Employers Evaluation Form to be filled in and submitted to the coordinator accordingly. Information were retrieved from the data given for this reasearch.

The following research objectives and questions were of interest:

i. To identify the factors influencing FOB's students' performance during industrial training. The factors were identified as interpersonal skills which concentrate on the students' attitude, motivational level as well as their flexibility to perform various tasks assigned by the supervisor, among other factors. The second part concentrates on the students soft skills which include the

social and human relations skills, communication level and teamwork among colleagues. The last part was on knowledge and technical skills, where students were evaluated on their ability to identify and formulate job problems, their learning abilities and efficiency in completing the job.

ii. To identify the difference between background of respondent and the students' performance during industrial training. Under this objective, students' background which consist their gender, academic year, program and whether they were trained under private or public sector were traced. Comparison will be made against their performance rated by their industrial supervisors. Under this objective, we want to clarify whether their background reflects their performance during industrial training, correlation-wise.

iii. To identify the level of FOB's students' performance during industrial training. The performance of the students will be assessed by the level of ratings, ranging from unsatisfactory, weak, average, good and excellent indicated on the assessment form.

iv. To identify the correlation between performance level and the employment opportunities among FOB students. To obtain findings for this objective, we will perform correlation analysis from the SPSS 16 package.

H1a: There is a correlation between interpersonal skills and employability opportunities for FOB's students.

H1b: There is a correlation between soft skills and employability opportunities for FOB's students.

H1c: There is a correlation between knowledge and technical skills and employability opportunities for FOB's students.

H2: There is significant difference in mean between FOB's students' performance and employment opportunities during the industrial training.

The significance of this study is to improve lecturer's teaching methods based on industrial supervisor's feedback on students. Employer's evaluation helps lecturers to improve students' knowledge, skills and abilities as needed by employers. Furthermore, faculty could benefit from the comment and evaluation given by employers in designing relevant course information, course learning outcome and topic in meeting employer's expectation.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Industrial training refers to the students' placement in the organisation within the stipulated duration (*Dasar Latihan Industri Institut Pengajian Tinggi*, 2010). Industrial training also refer to a positive developmental experience for university students and proved with some favorable outcomes as improved ability to secure a career-oriented position and, specialist knowledge, information technology, time management, communication skills and teamwork

(Callanan and Benzing, 2004). Internship is a bridge from classroom to workplace (Colloins, 2002). Students see internship as a mean to get a job (Cannon and Arnold, 1998); effectively develop soft skills such as communication teamwork and problem solving (Allen, 1991; Marshall and Mill, 1993) and receive valuable experience and compensation (Hite and Bellizi, 1986). On the other hand, disadvantages of industrial training include operational difficulties such as students feeling isolated and remote from the university (Hall et al., 2000); variable work experiences and conditions (Fraser et al., 2006); and difficulty to re-adjust to academic life or face problem with particular placement (Paisey and Paisey, 2010).

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Universiti Selangor (UNISEL), formerly known as Universiti Industri Selangor was established on 23rd August 1999. We are currently operating at two

campuses; the sprawling 1000-acre Main Campus in Bestari Jaya and the City Campus in Shah Alam. The establishment of UNISEL is in line with the State Government's intention to make Selangor the leading regional education hub. Selangor plays an active role in the delivery of higher education programs in order to enhance the development of human capital excellence. As one of the earliest private institutions of higher learning (IPTS) in Malaysia, UNISEL is unique as it is Malaysia's first state-owned university. As a private higher learning institution under State Government of Selangor intended to make Selangor as the leading regional education hub. Under business faculty, UNISEL offers six undergraduate business degree program which as Accountancy, Finance, Marketing, Human Resources, Business Management and Industrial Management.

The entire six undergraduate business degree programs including Accountancy, Finance, Marketing, Human Resources, Industrial Management and Business Management bachelor degree programs are recognized and reviewed under the Malaysian Qualification Accreditation (MQA). The Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) was established on 1 November 2007 with the coming in force of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007. The MQA was officially launched by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education, Dato' Mustapa Mohamed, on 2 November 2007. The main role of the MQA is to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) as a basis for quality assurance of higher education and as the reference point for the criteria and standards for national qualifications. The MQA is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the quality assurance practices and accreditation of national higher education.

3 METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the objectives of the study, all data are being evaluated using the SPSS 16 package whereby usage of descriptive statistics, correlations, T-test and ANNOVA analysis were used. Samples were obtained from FOB students of five bachelor degree programs which consist of Bachelor of Finance (BOF), Bachelor of Marketing (BOM), Bachelor of Business Management (BBM), Bachelor of Human Resources (BHRM) and Bachelor in Industrial Management (BIM). Only students who attended industrial training for January 2015 and May 2015 semester were utilized in this research. A total data of 583 students who performed their industrial training in Malaysia for the mentioned period were collected and analyzed.

The data is collected from the evaluation form that is given to employers to evaluate FOB students' performance during industrial training.

NO	OBJECTIVE	TEST
1	To identify factors influencing FOB's students' performance during industrial training.	Descriptive Analysis
2	To identify the differences between background of respondent and their performance during industrial training.	T-test for 2 variables (training place category and gender) and ANNOVA
3	To identify the level of students' performance during industrial training	Descriptive Analysis
4	To identify the correlation between performance and the employment opportunities among FOB students.	Correlate Analysis

Questionnaires are designed to evaluate FOB students' performance during industrial training. Likert scale method (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree) has been used for items in three sections which consists of interpersonal skills, soft skills and knowledge and technical skills. Under background of students, it consists of questions on academic year, gender and public versus private.

4 RESULT & ANALYSIS

Below are the findings on the placement and breakdown of students' programs:

Placement	N	%
Government	125	23.4
Private sector	409	76.6
Total	534	100.0

Program	N	%
BOF	56	10.5
BIM	39	7.3
BBM	125	23.4
BHRM	306	57.3
BOM	8	1.5
Total	534	100.0

Gender	N	%
Male	157	29.4
Female	377	70.6
Total	534	100.0

Students who worked at private sectors contributed to 76.6% of the placement of work and the remaining percentage of 23.4% are students who worked at government sector.

Referring to the above, more than half students (57.7%) performed their industrial training during May 2015 semester and 42.3% did their industrial training during January 2015 semester. Majority students worked at private sectors and it contributed to 76.6% of the placement of work with a total of 409 students. The remaining percentage of 23.4% is students who worked at government sector (government agency, statutory body or municipal council) and it total up to 125 students. Majority of the students were from BHRM (57.3%), next BBM (23.4%), followed by BOF (10.5%), BIM (7.3%) and BOM (1.5%) respectively. Out of 534 students, 157 students are male students and 377 students are female students. They made up of a total 29.4% and 70.6% respectively.

From the findings, it is concluded that approximately 58% (307) of the students are not hired by the company where they attended their industrial training. The balance number of students 42% (227) was able to secure employment within the company that they attended the training with. Majority of the students (at 28%) were hired as a full time staff while 11% of the students were hired as contract staff and the remaining of 4% were hired as part time staff.

4.1 Objective 1: To identify factors influencing FOB's students' performance during industrial training.

The first objective of the research is to identify factors influencing the students' performance during industrial training. The questionnaires were divided into 3 categories, namely interpersonal skills, soft skills and knowledge and technical skills. Majority supervisors rated students as average or above under the category of interpersonal skills where the 2 factors which stands out are attitude and willingness to accept feedbacks. The lowest scores is under the factor of motivation. Under soft skills category, the factor which stands out is teamwork and the lowest score was given to the factor

problem solving skills. The last category of knowledge and technical skills, factors which score high is the completing task and learning capabilities.

In conclusion, the top 5 factors which influence the students' performance are: (ranked from highest to lowest) teamwork; attitude; accountability and responsibility; willingness to accept feedbacks; and appearance. For the record, 4 out of the 5 factors are located under interpersonal skills category while teamwork is under soft skills category.

4.2 Objective 2: To identify the differences between background of respondent and their performance during industrial training.

There is a difference between background of students and their performance. Due to the significant correlation, therefore H1 is accepted and H0 is rejected. Base on the above, the three performance categories, which consist of interpersonal skills, soft skills and knowledge and technical skills, are significant towards their place of training (private and public sector) as well as their gender ($p\text{-value}=0.00 < 0.005$). Since they are significant, therefore H1a, H1b and H1c are accepted. It is concluded that employers from public and private sectors have difference perception on FOB's students' performance (interpersonal skills, soft skills and knowledge and technical skills) during practical training. At the same time, similar findings were detected where the employers perceived that the performance of male and female FOB's students during practical training differs. Similar findings can be found at academic year where the students performed their industrial training (May 2015 and January 2015). Significant value can be found where $p\text{-value}=0.00 < 0.005$, and it shows that no matter which semester the students perform their industrial training, employers' perception towards their performance differs.

There is no significant difference between the students' program (BOF, BIM, BHRM and BOM) with FOB students' performance during industrial training. Due to the insignificant correlation, therefore H1 is rejected and H0 is accepted. Base on the above, the study concludes that the students' performances are almost similar regardless of their respective program.

4.3 Objective 3: To identify the level of students' performance during industrial training

As a whole the average of level of performance of students is high at 68.7% rated by supervisor. The performance of student based on the industry's evaluation/rating is 29.6% at medium level and 1.7% at low level. This shows that majority of employers have a positive outlook on the performance of UNISEL's FOB students.

4.4 Objective 4: To identify the correlation between performance and the employment opportunities among FOB students

Under this objective, we have divided the respondents into 3 types of employment opportunities, namely hired as full time staff, part-time staff and contract staff. For the first type, students hired as full time staff, all 3 categories of performance (interpersonal skills, soft skills and knowledge and technical skills) correlate with each other. Thus, it can be concluded that if there are any changes in each of the variable, it will influence other variables as well.

For the second type of respondents, students hired as part time staff, only the soft skills found not correlate significantly with interpersonal skills ($p\text{-value} = .019 > 0.005$). It is concluded that only knowledge and technical skills correlates significantly with both interpersonal skills and soft skill.

For the third type, students hired as contract staff, there is a significant correlation among each of the variables. Similar to the first type (students hired as full time staff), if there are any changes in each of the variable, it will influence other variable as well.

5 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

From the findings, it is concluded that approximately 58% of the students are not hired by the company where they attended their industrial training. The balance number of students (227) were able to secure employment within the company that they attended the training with. Majority of the students (at 28%) were hired as a full time staff while 11% of the students were hired as contract staff and the remaining of 4% were hired as part time staff.

In conclusion, industry rated respondents performed under the interpersonal skills category but as the whole they said that the main factors which influence the students' performance are teamwork, attitude, accountability and responsibility, willingness to accept feedbacks and appearance. In interpersonal category, majority respondents were evaluated as average or above in terms of attitude and willingness to accept feedbacks but scored low on the quality of work/creativity and motivation category. Meanwhile under the category of soft skills, they perceived as very good in team work and time management but rated them lowest in terms of problem solving skills and communication-written skills. Finally on the knowledge and technical skills study shows that industry claimed that respondents are efficiency in completing tasks and having learning capabilities but rated them lowest in terms of identify and formulate job problem.

The study also shows that industry from public and private sectors have difference perception on FOB's students' performance (interpersonal skills, soft skills and knowledge and technical skills) during

practical training. On top of that they also found the performance of male and female respondents differs. Study also concludes that the students' performances are almost similar regardless of their respective programs.

As a whole the average of level of performance of respondents is high with the highest is interpersonal skill followed by soft skills and the lowest is knowledge and technical skills. The study also found that there is a significant correlation among each of the variables; they are interpersonal skills, soft skills knowledge and technical skills with employment opportunity.

The study results might also be helpful to academic institutions in the sense of better preparing students for business practical experiences by designing their courses of studies to be more practical. Case studies based on real-life examples should be incorporated in lectures and tutorials by means of classroom simulations and group work assignments. Taking advantage on the academic-industry cooperation practice, real cases at work could also be brought into lectures in order to enable the undergraduates to have a hands-on experience in tackling job task in their areas of studies at the real working world environment. The academic institution may invite expertise from industry to be industrial advisor as they can provide constructive feedback to the undergraduates as a means of sharpening their critical analytical skills, problem solving skills, decision making skills, oral communication skills, negotiating skills, and planning skills which are most sought after by employers nowadays.

The study's findings appear to have a number of implications for business constituencies such as organization, business students, and academic institutions. With respect to prospective organization, the findings could provide valuable benchmarking data in terms strengths and weaknesses of students in terms of interpersonal and job related skills. Students might utilize selected information as a diagnostic device when choosing among practical training opportunities. An individual student might, for example, identify the two or three issues of most importance to her or him and then evaluate the need or expectation of organization on practical students.

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