

Lifelong Learning And Youth Employability: Graduates In Malaysia

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Abstract: Youth employability has been discussed by many scholars across boundaries. Indeed, it is an important topic in relating to the graduates of all places. Higher learning institutions have produce thousands of graduates every year but the job opportunities are very small in the market. The demand of employment world has imposed graduates becoming transformative and adaptable to a fast changing environment. This has lead to critical discussion about the issue of unemployed graduates in Malaysia. The finding of literature review helps to seek an answers for graduates, educators and policy makers to offers more alternatives for graduates in stepping into the working world.

Keyword: graduates, employer, employment, lifelong learning, skills

I. INTRODUCTION

Youth employability has become a great concern in many countries across the world. Somehow, the rate of youth employability is at the critical phase. According to the report of G20 countries, the rate of youth unemployment is more critical than adults unemployment rate (OECD, 2012). Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013, Geneva-ILO, 2013, stated about 12.6 percent or 73 millions youth are not being employed in the labor market. Even though youth has completed the course at higher learning institution but still, there is no organization willing to take the risk to hire them for they don't meet employer's expectation. However, some employers do not want to hire certain youth since they were overqualified for the position in terms of academic qualification, and yet the experiences that youth posses were not enough to meet the employers need (ILO, 2013).

II. YOUTH & GRADUATES

Youth consist of individual from different races, belief, cultural and geographical area. In Malaysia according to the National Development Policy (1997) youth is define as individual who is range of 15 years old until 40 years old. However, the policy specifies the age of youth development

program should fall in the range of 18-25 years old, and this range of age portray the most of graduatess. Indeed, youth plays an important role for the future of the country. Everything that has been done today, youth has a great responsibility to continue the journey for the next generation. However, mentioning youth as important group of people, they carry the responsibility for the next generation and yet there are still numbers of unemployed graduates.

Nowadays graduate and unemployment has become synonym topic and many studies have been done on this area (Minten & Forsyth, 2014; Ahmad Rezvanfar, 2014; Mohd Yusof Hussain, et al., 2010). Scholars have discussed employability in various field and defining it were depends on the context of the study. According to Rivera, et al., (2012), employability is depends on the job seeker's competencies and also the actual market demand. It portray that graduates should have what it takes in order to be employ. In contrary it also depends on the actual market demand; if there are more vacancies during that particular time then the employability would be high. However, there some situation when there will be a job freezing phenomenon during economic crisis. According to Voon & Ma (2014) financial crisis has significantly correlated with perceived job insecurity. It portrays that employee who already employed feel threatened by the economic crisis in term of their job security. This postulated that youth might have problems in getting hire

during economic downturn. On the other hand, studies done by Minten & Forsyth (2014) mentioned graduates tend not to pursue their career path with the same line in what they have been study during university years. It means that graduates do not only meant for the job that relates with their university's courses, they may divert into another professional line. This shows that even if there are job vacancies available, youth tend to choose their own career.

Despites arguments on youth employability, employers are still remain to seek the best candidates to fill into their organization and numbers of unemployment of youth are still unanswerable.

Nowadays, to be employed is not an easy task. Youth need to be competent and to be the best in order to get hired. According to Mohd Yusof Husain, et al., (2010) in his study found out that communication skills, written communication skills, entrepreneur skills, critical thinking and problem solving are pertinent in the eye of the employers. This statement articulates that employers seek the most to hire graduates who possess soft skills within him/her self. It is clear that soft skills are important for graduates to learn, polish and embrace it in order to become a versatile individual. Mohamad Sattar, et al., (2013) in his study stated that graduates need to emphasis on leadership skill, entrepreneur skill, technology skill and informational skills in order to be able to compete in the job market.

Youth need to be aware of what employers' demand in term of bringing the profit to the company. Employers only interested to hire those individuals that will helps to increase the organization's revenue. Therefore, youth need to tackle more aspects in the soft skills matter (communication skills, written communication skills, entrepreneur skills, critical thinking and problem solving) which would increase youth's competencies.

Indeed, to increase individual competencies they need to have a desire to learn. Learning is a process of changing the state of knowledge, skills and attitude towards positivity. The needs of lifelong learning among youth are crucial and it is supported by Rezvanfar (2014) in his study stated that knowledge acquisition, processing and transmission are pertinent in today's knowledge-based economy. It means that to survive in current world that full of modernization and innovation, a person must equip with knowledge and indeed, lifelong learning is one of the way to gain knowledge continuously.

III. LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning has been discussed by scholars as continuous learning process since the day they were born (Pembe Bozat et al., 2014), as a linked to diagnose and prognosis education phenomenon (Manea, 2014), and to achieve one's need in life (Akçay & Yildirim, 2013). In simple words lifelong learning is learning without any escape. People will learn anything in everyday life for better living and to pursuit dreams. Lifelong learning is also a means to an end and it is skill for survival (Laal, et al., 2014). It means that people will try to equip their self with adequate information or knowledge in order to live in the transition of globalization

and increase quality of life (Tyler, 2009.; Akçay & Yildirim, 2013). As mentioned before, youth is the range of 15 years old to 40 years old. According to Laal, et al., (2014) in his research, at the stage of 15-24 years old individual may gone through a formal learning process through primary, secondary and tertiary education, and non formal learning through family, social organization, religious institutions and mass media. While at the age of 25 years old to 40 years old individual may learn informally through experiences in life, working environment and through problem solving for continuous development of knowledge, skills and attitude. For youth to be employed in the workplace they must learn to have better attitude and shows that they are fit in the job. It is because, the tendency of youth to show their best attitude (career task involvement, career goal sensitivity, career purpose social networking, career linked self-efficacy) at their work exploration is reflecting on their work performance at workplace, and it is proven that youth learn the career attitude is benefit towards organizational performance (Jain & Jain, 2013). Moreover, learning and education is an element that most of developing countries were counting on it because it brought the element of human capital development which most of the countries were seeking to achieve it (Saxon, Hull, Fearon, Williams & Tindigarukayo, 2011). According to Manea (2014), lifelong learning works as a solution in the matter of workplace and work productivity. In the workplace itself the experience workers are expected to practice continuous learning, and so this tenet has urge youth to adopt lifelong learning in order to penetrate into the challenging labor market. In addition based on the study by Celebi, et al., (2014), stated that UNESCO, OECD and European Union was focusing lifelong learning for competency development to all target group associated with society and employment. Nevertheless, it has some effect on youth unemployment due to the economic crisis. Indeed, youths have to be strong, and equip them self with the adequate skill, knowledge and ability to catch up with the employers' demand in today's labor market. According to Akçay & Yildirim (2014) learning becomes very important for personal and financial development. Even though youth had finished their school, the information, knowledge, skill and experiences that they gain are scarce. Youth are still obscure in the working industries because they have not gain enough exposure and obtain little during internships. Buttressing, this paper tends to seek the possible ideas and information that may help youth to penetrate the working industries

IV. TODAY'S YOUTH

Youth nowadays are different from the old days. It is because they have been through in the globalization, modernization and innovation that expose them to the technology and creativity thus making them to adapt with the rapid changing environment of the world. The characteristic of youth is changing according to time. The global urge youth to adapt with the environment and stress were existed on them. It is national responsibility to encounter with this matter as youth is actually an asset of a country. Malaysia social policies have a wide range to address the social problem such as education,

health, poverty reduction and employment among women and youth in Malaysia (Rojanah & Najibah, 2011). The policies have mention that the employment as one of the social problem in Malaysia. However, nowadays, the employment rate among youth in Malaysia is declining and become a concern matter to the government (Masura, et al., 2012). Unemployment of graduates in Malaysia can be caused by factors such as the policies and economic downturn. One of the causes is the government regulation, which has extended the period of retirement to the age of 60. According to Danson & Gilmore (2012) healthy lifestyle has increase the rate of life expectancy and extending the working life is a way to support the aging population. Furthermore, Malaysia is developing country which keeps improving the standard of living and adapting challenges for health and social services thus, aging population is inevitable (Karim, 1997). This actually creates a situation where more graduates will face difficulties in finding the job especially in the government sector as whereby Malaysia becoming aging population and policies has extended the retirement age up to 60 years old. Moreover, there are more graduates that have been produced by private and public universities, and yet the numbers of job opportunities and vacancies are lacking. Indeed, economics of a country is the determinant for the people to live well. The economy of a country which encounter with deficit may include the possibility for people having a hard to time to find a job. And it became even worse if the current workers are in the list of retrenchment, downsizing or merging; which they have to accept the offer from the company to quit the job and retrieve the compensation. Therefore, it explains that today's youth are not easy to live in current situation since they are facing with the great challenges that global creates. Youth that are vulnerable in employment world however need to survive and choose the good life's path. They need to increase their values and competencies in order to impress the employer that they possess the credibility to enter into the organization. However, most youth that failed and give up may tend to lose their focus, thus yield the occurrence of stress and consequently may fall into the delinquency behavior (Flannery, Hussey & Jefferis 2005). Indeed, this could damage the future society in developing human capital of our nation.

V. HUMAN CAPITAL & EMPLOYABILITY

Generally, this theory explain human capital correspond to any characteristic that individual possess or acquire and use it as a tool to achieve productivity. According to Becker 1962, employees' productivity depends on the human capital, whereby the person does have set of knowledge and skills needed in the industries which will increase the performance. According to Schultz (1961), human capital does not only explain the set of skill, however, it seen as a human effort to achieve the quality for enhancement process in order to adapt with the changing environment. Both has view the human capital in different ways, one with the important skills and knowledge serve as tool to increase productivity, the other one is human effort to increase skill and knowledge for the purpose of adapting change. Therefore, from this theory view, youth need to increase both knowledge and skills; and increase

the awareness on self adaptive upon changing environment in order to be employ in the job. In a way to achieve that, youth need to have positive attitude towards lifelong learning in order to increase the knowledge and skill needed by the employers; and also need to increase self efficacy on belief that he/ she be able to adapt the change. Such efforts are needed for youth in order to be employ in job market. Youth need to have confidence, but to achieve confidence there are elements that they need to fill. They need to equip their selves with knowledge and skills, they need to be ready with any possible challenges and change environment; they need to be an optimistic in facing any kind of situation. Therefore, lifelong learning can be a method for youth to keep learning and equip their self with adequate knowledge, skill and information.

According to Robinson (2006) employability skill can be identified in eight group which are problem solving, information management, decision making, communication, writing, strategic planning self management and resource. These skills are needed in the workplace for individual to be competent in their job. Furthermore, youth should take initiatives to upgrade their self and understand the employers demand in finding the new employees so that more youth being able to be hire in the job. Consequently it helps the economics of a country became stable in a way there were less number of unemployed youth, hence reducing the possible percentage of crime rate and prevent destruction in society. Indeed, employers should give opportunities on youth to be hire in job because, youth is the promising generation that will lead the country in the future, so employers should not waste human resources. Perhaps government should play important role to develop a nation by creating a new job with a new project or any new development in a country. This helps to reduce the unemployment issues among graduates since there are many new job opportunities will be created. Universities or any learning institutions should encourage youth to equip individual with adequate knowledge and learn skills that most employers seek. According to (Minten & Forsyth, 2014; Mohamad Sattar, et al., 2013; Ju, Zhang & Pacha, 2011) lack of employment among people is because lack of employability skill therefore, the authorities should play potent role to increase the employability skill as mention by Robinson (2006). Policy maker such as Ministry of Education should creates changes that will encourage more youth to involve in lifelong learning as it become one of the important aspect in the employability. Perhaps Malaysia social plan should focus more on youth unemployment since it is a salient social problem among youth in Malaysia. Indeed, employers are more favor on youth that are well prepared and have some basic skill of knowledge or general knowledge in the workplace (Mohamad Sattar, et al., 2013; Mohd Yusof, et al., 2010).

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As earlier discussion mention about learning can improve individual competencies therefore it is an exclamation for youth to take action and start learning continuously as it will develop a better youth and nation which trigger more

competitive advantage in the market for organization to have valuable employees whereby they acquire better skills, knowledge and expertise in the organization. Aforementioned review of literature have shown how important skill, knowledge and attitude of job seekers, therefore as a conclusion this paper suggest an alternatives for graduates/youth to make an effort in unleashing their potential by increasing their level of knowledge, skills and attitude via continuous learning which is lifelong learning. These suggestions postulated to help youth in the process job hunting:

- ✓ Youth must be responsible to increase and equip their self with adequate information regarding workplace that they intent to apply.
- ✓ Lifelong learning is important for youth to embrace; institutions that revolve around youth must take role to encourage it. The action taken by the institution may help youth to be ready and self equipped with the workplace knowledge's.
- ✓ Policy maker encourage youth to foster lifelong learning, as knowledge is a powerful thing that driven people forward.
- ✓ Attend any extra curriculum, especially to increase communication.
- ✓ Youth should take initiatives on improving knowledge on employability through web-based learning such as *Ready4work, Jobstreet, Godzilink.com and others.*

This paper suggests possible alternatives base on the current situation in Malaysia. This paper encourages youth to be employ in the labor market. In contrary, finding a job could be hard and perhaps there is another alternative besides of being employ. Job searching, matching and hiring is not an easy task to complete within six months after graduating. Instead of finding a job, graduates may create the job. It is a good thing to have graduates with entrepreneurial skill because it shows that graduates are innovative to create their own career path and generate wealth (Kadderi, 2010). However, according to Masura, et al., (2012) entrepreneurship skill is found to be an insignificant to the employability of graduates in a job market. Therefore future research warrant a study on graduates and entrepreneurial skills as to encourage graduates to be independent and not to rely on the job vacancy, and how true are entrepreneurial skill helps graduates facing their life after university's years.

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