Employer Satisfaction in Brunei Darussalam

Juliet Hoh Chui Suan[1], Wu Shaorong[2], Shi Qiuheng[3]

ABSTRACT

Brunei Darussalam's Long-Term Development Plan 2035 outlines the Ministry's goals for the national education system to prepare Bruneian youths for employment and to embrace Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) as a concept that guides one's way of life. Keeping that in perspective, a research was initiated to find out employer satisfaction on employees in Brunei. Employer data and contact details were collected through various database, yellow pages and social media. Broadly, this study supports the established Input-Environment-Output (IEO) model in evaluating employer satisfaction in Brunei Darussalam. The study analyzed data from 454 employer self-reports from private and public sectors with a diverse employer profile and 24 employers were interviewed. Employers were asked to rate their satisfaction with the 24 competencies the graduates employed in their respective companies possess. The highest level of employer expectation in job competencies were communication abilities, problem solving skill, commitment, self-confidence, managerial skills, time management, creativity and innovative, knowledge of specific computer applications, punctually and specific technical knowledge. The analysis of this study shows that employers are mostly satisfied. A set of recommendations were also formulated based on the results of the study.

[1] Institute of Education, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, China, Juliet.hoh@moe.gov.bn, **[*corresponding author]**

[2] Ningde Vocational and Technical College, China, 1134790730@qq.com

[3] Institute of Education, Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, China, qhshi@xmu.edu.cn

1.   Research Background

The long-term development framework for Brunei, set out in Brunei Vision 2035, makes education and human capital development key priorities. The implementation of an Education Strategy by the Ministry of Education to achieve Brunei Vision 2035 will prepare Brunei Darussalam's youth for employment and to embrace MIB as a concept that guides one's way of life. There is a need to continue fine-tuning the education system in Brunei to ensure that students equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed in today's world. Students in Brunei should specifically be responsive to the needs of various stakeholders, realize the mission and vision of the Ministry of Education, and develop 21st-century skills, to emerge as tomorrow's leaders (JPKE, 2018). As of December 2020, there are 9,801 registered local unemployed, where 2,977 hold degree and above stated by Job Centre Brunei or the Energy and Industry Department. Area of study with high record of surplus against industry needs are as follows: Business Administration/Management (245); Sociology and anthropology (96); Mathematics (86); Usuluddin (86); Biology (85); Accounting and Finance (83); Geography (83); Mechanical engineering (79); Syariah (79) and so on (i-Ready, 2020). About 30 percent of the candidates graduated from higher institutions did not get the job, due to the reasons of quality of university graduates, job competencies of graduates were not up to employer satisfaction or requirement or any other reasons.

The ability to communicate effectively and work in teams is especially important in work; employers actively seek graduates who are adept problem solvers. It is 'no longer enough just to be a graduate, but instead an employable graduate' (Tomlinson, 2012). Wash (2015) stated that 'capabilities and competencies will measure top candidates for current and future jobs and that communication and presentation skills are required for about 40% of all positions. These communication skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, interpersonal communication, an appreciation of diversity, an ability to negotiate through individual differences, innovation, and creativity (Kuther, 2013). The skills gap necessitates investigation as to whether the students know what attributes to 'sell' so they can become marketable, hireable, and able ultimately to contribute to the productivity of the economy (Finch et. al., 2016). Given this, employers and academics should work together to make instruction meaningful and relevant to workplace need so that there is an alignment between employer's needs, student's skills, and higher education responsibilities. This employer survey finds a gap between what employers see as most important in hiring decision, job competencies of recent graduates that are required to meet industry needs in various professions and their satisfaction.

2.   Literature Review

The concept of satisfaction was defined around the year 1250 to 1300. Satisfaction is derived from Latin words satis plus facere, which mean 'enough to make or do'. Today satisfaction is understood as 'a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) about his or her expectations'. Employer is a person who runs a business on his own or in partnership and engages at least one paid employee on a continuous basis in operating the business. Employer satisfaction refers to the overall quality (work and performance) of the university graduates on job competencies in their company or organization.

In today's competitive world, a degree is no longer a guarantee of employability. HEIs need to improve their linkage with industry sector to find out the skills preferred by employers when they recruit employees (Kivinen & Silvennoinen, 2002). The employers are the ones who are most familiar that takes place in the work environment so higher institutions do not ignore their complaints regarding the quality of graduates produced (Evers et al., 1998). Graduates expect that they will have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their jobs and advance their careers. But in the modern knowledge economy, employers have an expectation that a university education will provide graduates with the employability skills required to perform their jobs (Bok, 2006). Employers want the skills they need when they need them, delivered in a manner they can afford. As such, when considering the human capital theory, it is imperative that universities actively invest in their students to create capital in the sense of soft skill development. Human capital theory synthesizes well with employer satisfaction studies, as well as Wagner's seven survival skills. In his book The Global Achievement Gap, Wagner (2010) described today's students as New World learners. Wagner (2010) outlined seven soft skills students must possess to be competitive in the 21st-century global economy. The skills, called Seven Survival Skills, are as follows: 1) critical-thinking and problem-solving; 2) collaboration across networks and leading by influence; 3) agility and adaptability; 4) initiative and entrepreneurship; 5) effective oral and written communications; 6) accessing and analyzing information; and 7) curiosity and imagination. 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 (Fugate et al., 2004).

Spencer and Spencer (1993) view competency as a characteristic of an individual that is causally related to job performance. Competencies can be accumulated within an individual and represent a capacity to perform at some future point (Page, Wilson & Kolb, 1993). The term competence refers to a state of being or a quality. It is a holistic term that refers to one's overall capacity or ability to do something successfully. In term of competence development, competence is defined as the ability of a person to

handle and cope with or complete a task or job successfully. This capacity covers the perceptual-motor skills, cognitive factors, affective factors, personality traits and social skills. In a workplace context, competency is a combination of cognitive skills (technical knowledge, expertise & abilities), and personal or behavioural characteristics (principles, attitudes, values & motives), which are a function of an individual's personality.

Successful performance, while dependent on a number of factors, will require the presence of both components. Spencer and Spencer (1993) suggest that, if people with the right personal characteristics are recruited initially, then they should have the capacity to quickly acquire the relevant (technical) knowledge and skills in order to attain their employers' performance objectives (Hodges &Burchell, 2013). According to most definitions, a graduate's skills, capabilities, competencies, and attributes are the key factors for employability. Employability skills are conceived as 'skills required not only to gain employment but also to progress within an enterprise to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions. Employability Skills for the Future (ACCI and BCA) identified eight employability skills: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organizing, self-management, learning, and technology (Oliver et al., 2014). On the other hand, Yorke and Knight (2004) stated that employability 'has a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy'.

Employers gave greatest weight on employee attitudes and employers identified as essential the affective characteristics like adaptability, responsibility and positive attitude toward work (Gregson, & Bettis, 1991). Finding the right person with the right skills for the right job is never an easy process. In various surveys, employers have listed both basic and complex skills that are often lacking in the available pool of job candidates. These skills include critical thinking/problem solving, communication, collaborate/teamwork, appreciation of diversity, ability to use IT, leadership, self-direction, professionalism/work ethic, and ethics/social responsibility (Trilling & Fadel, 2017). With regard to employer satisfaction survey (ESS) for this study, applied the similar local context in evaluating the overall work and performance of graduate undergraduate students in Brunei. As well as to identify the key competencies needed in the workplace; ways in which university curricula meet with the needs of the employers, and how well universities build relationships and goodwill with crucial employers in Brunei.

3.   Research Methods

3.1.   *Theoretical framework*

This study explores employers from various perspectives. Firstly, it explores the current status and the factors affecting employer satisfaction in Brunei Darussalam. Secondly, it seeks to identify the employer perceives as important in hiring decision. Thirdly, to identify job competencies needed by employers. Fourthly, to response on employers' perception towards the university education in Brunei Darussalam.

To achieve the purposes above, this study uses the Input-Environment-Output (IEO) model theory (Astin, 1993). Astin model is divided into three sub-areas: 1) Input→, 2) Environment→, and 3) Output. According to Astin (1993), the arrows demonstrate the relationships among three different variables. The IEO model deals with the most issues in higher education assessment and evaluation including student learning satisfaction, employer satisfaction, and other outcomes. It also assesses to what extent the activity meets stakeholders' expectations. Employers were asked to rate their satisfaction with the 24 competencies the graduates employed in their respective companies possess. These competencies include personal abilities, interpersonal competencies, and professional competencies based on the modified framework source compiled from Knight and Yorke (2002) on psycho-social construct, USEM model (Fugate et al., 2004) and others. The professional competencies involved with cultivation of productive relationships with customers, businesses, and the public; acceptance of critiques and enforcement of direction in the workplace; trustworthiness with sensitive information; understanding of personal role; and realistic career expectations. Whereas interpersonal competencies consist of ability to work with a diverse group of people, with multiple approaches.

Last, but no least personal competencies refer with establishment efficient and effective work habits, as well as a possession of well- developed ethics, integrity, and sense of loyalty. Competencies are important to consider because they equate to areas of personal capability that enable employees to successfully perform their jobs by achieving outcomes or successfully performing tasks.

3.2.   *Research Participants and Procedures*

The contact person in the database of this study was an employer responsible for graduate recruitment, such as the director, head of the department, or the human resources manager. The employer satisfaction questionnaire was distributed to all government ministries/departments, as well as various private companies in Brunei. Brunei has six higher institutions, namely Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD), Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB), Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA), Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan (KUPUSB), International Graduate Studies College (IGS), and Laksamana College of Business (LCB) in Brunei. Out of

these six institutions, four are national public universities: UBD, UTB, UNISSA, and KUPUSB. IGS and LCB are private colleges. UBD and UTB are under the administration of the Ministry of Education whereas UNISSA and KUPUSB are under the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

The employer questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A is used to collect various demographic data of the companies. Section B is used to collect data on employer perceptions on hiring decision, satisfaction with the job competencies of recently graduated employees, and future employment view. The job competencies section consists of 24 Likert items which were rated on a six-point scale, namely "Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Generally Dissatisfied, Generally Satisfied, Satisfied, and Very Satisfied". The job competencies are categorized into three sub-scales, namely professional skills, interpersonal competencies, and personal abilities. In this study, a total of 500 employers' questionnaires was distributed to the public and private sector in Brunei, and 482 copies were recovered. The recovery rate was 96.4%, the active rate was 94.2%, and there were 454 useful surveys. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to collect data.

Two main research instruments were used in this study. The first was the survey questionnaire, employer satisfaction survey. The second was the interview. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using SPSS Version 21. Interviews with the employer were conducted to assist universities in Brunei to prepare students for the work environment and to better serve the needs of the company or industry.

3.3.   Interview Findings

The semi-structured interviews were designed to obtain in-depth information about employer perceptions on the overall quality of new employees, hiring decision, the most important job competencies of new employees, and employers' perception towards the local university education. Twenty-four employers were interviewed, and each interview lasted about 30 minutes to an hour in duration. Employers are satisfied with the overall quality of their recent employees because the human resource department in companies tends to recruit the best employees. Both public and private sector employers emphasize the importance of attendance and punctuality, as well as the overall quality of work and performance. Employers agree that different industries require different skills and abilities. Therefore, the student's academic major is crucial. The interview results show employers are most concerned with personal abilities, followed by interpersonal skills and professional competencies.

The majority of employers value attendance and punctually, dedication and commitment, confidence, integrity, overall quality of work and performance, critical thinking or problem-solving skills, networking skills, and others. Students need to develop skills to identify and critically analyze problems. Problem-based exercises

may help develop these skills. Soft skills such as communication skills should be developed through practice, not merely studied in theory. Employers see the importance of attitude the need for graduates who are balanced in their intelligence, emotions, and spirituality. For employers, good quality graduates are those who can be integrated into modern profit-oriented organizations and can quickly and efficiently contribute to these groups.

Employers want to employ graduates for the knowledge and ideas they bring to an organization; their willingness to learn and speed of learning; their flexibility, adaptability, and ability to deal with change; their logical, analytical, and problem-solving skills; and their creativity and innovation. Similar findings were also highlighted in the previous studies (Syafiq & Fikawati, 2008; Harvey et. al., 1996; Harvey et. al., 1997).

Work can be different in the public sector compared to the private sector. Employers commented that employees in the private sector tend to work hard and are very productive. The medium of instruction in most private companies is English, but the main mode of communication in the public sector is Malay. Most companies are willing to hire locals as this is one of the government initiatives, but skilled expatriates and other foreign workers are also needed in the Brunei labour force.

Most employers agree that universities in Brunei are producing enough supply of graduates, but not necessarily enough graduates with adequate skills. Employers have some suggestion for the university's education in Brunei: close collaboration should be cultivated between local universities and employers for the benefit of students. For employers to provide professional training that is related to the courses taught in university. Universities play a vital role in reaching out to companies and organizing relevant industrial attachments for their students. Moreover, universities can invite employers to provide input on curriculum development (Hoh, 2018).

The collaboration between university and industry will better equip students with skills for work and professional life. Employers tend to put more emphasis on practical skills, so universities need to find ways to make education more practical and open to approaches in the industry. Employer highlights the need for more courses that relate to industry need and demand. Course content must incorporate both the theoretical and practical, and the curriculum should be constantly kept up to date with industry need and demand. On their parts, universities should be creative and willing to offer more local-centric courses which address local industry needs.

4.   Results

4.1   Reliability and Validity of Survey Instruments

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and scree test were used to determine the suitability of the employer satisfaction questionnaire. The results of the analysis indicate a KMO statistic of 0.961, which is higher than 0.60 and near to 1 and therefore is valid for the factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity chi-square value is 10406.586 with 276 degrees of freedom at 0.000 level of significance, which indicates that there is a strong unification among the items. Through the Principal components factor analysis (PCA) by using a Varimax rotation, factors extracted derived from the total variance in the correlation matrix can be applied. There were 32 items in the Employer Satisfaction Survey and after exploring several times, 8 items were removed with less than 0.40 factor loading and 24 items retain which were fit well with each factor. These 24 items are reduced to 3 factors which have correlation values ranging from .783 to .482, which account for 70.92% of the total variance in competencies employer satisfaction. After using the factor analysis, Cronbach alpha coefficient was applied to the instrument to determine the internal consistency. An alpha coefficient of more than 0.90 is classified as highly reliable (Julie Pallet, 2011; Huck, 2012). The results indicates that all these sub-dimensions of the questionnaires are higher than 0.80.

4.2   Demographic antecedents affect Overall Employer Satisfaction

Table 1 shows that there are statistically significant differences on sector mean scores on overall employer satisfaction (t=4.027). The mean score for the public sector is 5.44 with a weighted percentage of 88.80%; the mean score for the private sector is 5.04 with a weighted percentage of 80.80%. This shows that public sector is more satisfied with their overall employer satisfaction than private sector.

Table 1: Overall Employer Satisfaction based on various variables

	Category	N	WS%
Sector	Public/Government	126	88.80
	Private	328	80.80
Nature of the Company	Automotive	20	80.80
	Arts, Media and Publishing	14	78.40
	Administration and Law	12	95.20
	Business, Retail, Wholesale	44	79.00
	Banking, Finance and Insurance	14	90.40
	Construction, Engineering and the Built Environment	55	80.80
	Education and Training	70	83.80
	Health care and Social services	15	89.60
	ICT	38	81.40
	Logistic, Transportation & Warehousing	14	80.80
	Oil/Gas	23	84.80
	Primary Resources Production/Manufacturing	12	85.00
	Property Services	6	85.20
	Restaurant and Cafes	34	78.40
	Technical and Professional services	35	89.00
	Tourism, recreational & Hospitality	45	80.40
	Other :	3	76.40
Company Size	Below 10	77	78.60
	11-20	102	78.20
	21-40	81	83.60
	41-100	85	85.60
	More than 101	109	88.40
Undergraduate Employee working in the company	1-5	140	79.40
	6-10	101	80.40
	11-20	64	83.00
	21-40	67	85.60
	More than 41	82	90.60
Relevance of qualification to job	Yes	416	83.00
	No	38	83.00
Salary	Below B$1,000	141	79.80
	B$1,001-1,500	120	79.20
	B$1,501-2,000	47	80.40
	B$2,001-2,500	24	84.60
	More than B$2,501	122	91.20
Training	Yes	340	82.40
	No	114	84.80
	Total	454	

Note: N= 454, WS%=Weighted satisfaction %age

* = $p<0.05$, ** = $p<0.01$, *** = $p<0.001$, NSD = no significance.

There are no significant differences on the nature of the company mean scores on overall employer satisfaction (t=1.156). "Administration and Law" has the highest weighted percentage at 95.20% (Mean=5.76) followed by "Banking, Finance and Insurance" at 90.40% (Mean=5.52), "Healthcare and Social Services" at 89.60% (Mean=5.48), Technical and Professional Services at 89% (Mean=5.45) and so on. For the company size, the means of employer satisfaction are significantly higher for larger companies (more than 101 employees) than smaller company sizes: 41-100, 21-40, below 10 and 11-20 employees (F=2.662, p<.001). The company size of "More than 101" has the highest weighted percentage at 88.40% (Mean=5.42), followed by "41-100" at 85.60% (Mean=5.28), "21-40" at 83.60% (Mean=5.18), "Below 10" at 78.60% (Mean=4.93), and finally "11-20" at 78.20% (Mean=4.91).

The means of employer satisfaction are highest for the more than 41 recently graduated employees' group, followed by 21-40, 11-20, 6-10, and less than 5 recently graduated employees (F=3.165, p<.001). The mean score for more than 41 is 5.53 with a weighted percentage of 90.60%; the mean score for 21-41 is 5.28 with a weighted percentage of 83.00; the mean score for 6-10 is 5.02 with a weighted percentage of 80.40%; and the mean score for 1-5 is 4.97 with a weighted percentage of 79.40. There are statistically significant differences among graduated salary means scores on employer satisfaction (F=4.685, P<.001). At the lowest end of the spectrum, salary of "B$1,001-1500" has a weighted percentage of 79.20%, followed by "Below B$1,000" at 79.80%, "B$1,500-2000" at 80.40%, and "B$2,001-2,500" at 84.60%. On the other hand, 'More than B$2,501" has the highest weighted percentage at 91.20%. There are no significant differences in the employer satisfaction in relation to the training (t=0.705). There is a higher mean of employer satisfaction for no training provided for new university graduates in job competencies. "No" has the weighted percentage of 84.80% (Mean=5.24) whereas "Yes" has the weighted percentage of 82.40% (Mean=5.12).

4.3   *Employer Perspective: Hiring Decision, Job Performance and Top Ten Essential Job Competencies*

Descriptive statistics with means, standard deviations, and weighted percentages are calculated. The scale for hiring decision is based on a six-point Likert type scale, namely "1 = Not important at all, 2 = Unimportant, 3 = Less important, 4 = Quite important, 5 = Important and 6 = Very Important". According to the survey results Table 2, the overall employer satisfaction has the mean of 4.62 with a weighted percentage of 72.37%, indicating that employers are satisfied with hiring decisions in relation to recent graduates.

Table 2: Employer Satisfaction on hiring decision

Employer Variables	M	SD	WS%
Major/Discipline	5.63	.72	92.64
Performance in the interview	5.56	.71	91.15
Resume	5.03	.81	80.62
GPA/Grades	4.83	.74	76.61
Working experience	4.34	.80	66.83
University attended	3.58	.92	51.67
Recommendation	3.35	.71	47.05
Overall Hiring Decision	4.62	.36	72.37

Note: N=455, M=Mean, WS%=Weighted Satisfaction %age

Employers in Brunei Darussalam value major/discipline (92.64%) most, followed by interview performance (91.15%), resume (80.62%) and GPA/Grades (76.61%). The least important factors are work experience (66.83%), university attended (51.67%), and recommendation (47.05%). Many employers believe that in addition to previous work experience, the interview performance and resume could also reflect the performance of prospective employees in the company. On the other hand, employers do not place a lot of importance on recommendation letters and the university attended. More broadly, employers' value moral quality, professional quality, physical and mental health, desire to continuously learn, innovation, and performance in work. Many employers also believe that a good command of English language, critical thinking, and managerial and leadership skills are essential.

Employer satisfaction with overall job performance on employee has a weighted percentage of 83.05%. Employers are more satisfied with the competencies of recently graduated employees on networking skills (Mean=5.28), self-confidence (Mean=5.24), capacity for co-operation and teamwork (Mean=5.23), ability to work with people of different background (Mean=5.22), being flexible and adaptable (Mean=5.22), independence (Mean=5.20), integrity (Mean=5.20), dedication and commitment (Mean=5.20), decision ability (Mean=5.19) and knowledge of computer application (Mean=5.19). Employers are most concerned with interpersonal skills (84.2%), followed by personal abilities (83.49%). On the other hand, employers give professional competencies (82.02%) the lowest rank. See Appendix 1 for the detail information for employer satisfaction on employee performance and importance job-related competencies (Hoh, 2018; Hoh, 2019).

The top ten job competencies that employers were consider essential, in order, were as follows: communication abilities, problem-solving skills, commitment to be the top three most important skills, followed by self-confidence, leadership skills, time management, creativity and innovative, knowledge of specific computer applications, punctually, and specific technical knowledge. Most employer suggested that a person who can think critically, act logically, and evaluate situations to make decisions and solve problems, is a valuable asset. To sum up, employers are more concerned with professional competencies and least concerned with interpersonal skills. Personal

abilities are ranked second by employers based on top ten essential job competencies. A positive trend can be seen between the importance given to each competency and the level of satisfaction with the competency, i.e., the greater the importance given to a competency, the higher the level of employer satisfaction with that competency. Given that it is a matter of subjective assessment, employers tend to recruit according to the competencies they consider to be most important; it is therefore logical for the level of satisfaction to be close to that of importance, as an employer will choose those candidates who better fulfil their selection criteria.

5.   Discussion

Table 3 shows the comparison of employee competencies and employer expectation. It has been identified that employees view themselves good on communication abilities (speaking, writing, listening), self-confidence, and dedication to be the top three most satisfaction competencies, followed by accept feedback, flexibility, decision ability, creativity, being a role model, independency and ability to work with people of different background. But in reality, workplace, graduate employee needs to match the requirement of job competencies by the employers or the organization. Whereas compare to the top ten of employer's expectation in job competencies in order to assess an employee's readiness to work are, problem solving skill, leadership, time management/meeting deadline, knowledge of specific computer application, attendance/punctuality and specific technical knowledge.

Table 3. Compare of Student Competencies and Employer Expectation

M	SM	SR	EI	Area of Competencies
VS	5.17	1	1	Communication abilities*
NI	4.74	**21**	2	Problem solving skill*
S	4.97	3	3	Dedication and Commitment
S	4.98	2	4	Self Confidence/ Self esteem
NI	4.78	**16**	5	Leadership*
NI	4.83	**13**	6	Time management
S	4.90	7	7	Creativity and Innovative
NI	4.68	**23**	8	Knowledge of computer application*
NI	4.86	12	9	Attendance/Punctuality
NI	4.74	**20**	10	Specific technical knowledge*

Key: 1. Professional Competencies*; 2. Interpersonal Competencies**; and 3. Personal Abilities
Note:
Range of Means and Description: 1.00-4.87 (NI - Needs Improvement)
                                                        4.88-4.99 (S - Satisfactory)
                                                        5.00-6.00 (VS - Very Satisfactory)
SM=Student Mean; SR=Student Rank; EI=Employer Importance

This research provides an insight and understanding of job competencies expectation by employers. Knowing this, it will be easy for undergraduate students to focus and confirm the preparation of the workforce and the changing demands of employment. In most jobs, it is difficult to utilisese workers effectively who lack personal abilities. Employees with good personal abilities, honestly, openly, show respect for themselves, co-workers, and supervisors regardless of other people's diversity and individual differences. Employees have a positive attitude and take the initiative to learn new things to get the job done. Rather than blaming others when things go wrong, they are accountable for their actions. They also have the ability to set goals and priorities in their work and personal lives so that resources of time, money and other resources may be conserved and managed. These individuals practice good personal habits, come to work as scheduled, on time and dressed appropriately, and are agreeable to change when necessary.

To keep up with workforce demands, it is crucial for universities to stay abreast of the skills and knowledge needed by the workforce for anticipated jobs, but to adequately prepare students to compete in the technology-driven world and be a part of the highly skilled labour force. As tomorrow's workforce will need not only knowledge but also experience in applying that knowledge; a collaborative effort from both an educational institution and the industry is required to communicate critical employability skills for the workforce. Martin et al. (2000) stresses the predicament of universities in educating and training their students that will address the requirements of employers. Having empathy and listening to customers were sometimes mentioned as the key aspect of communication skills. The employers indicated critical thinking/problem solving skills were top second essential in job competencies for employees.

According to Hyslop-Margison (1999), an employee who has acquired problem solving skills will be able to make creative solution, is practical and independent. An employee who has confidence or one may inspire confidence in others as well as strong decision abilities are important because it can help employee to make quick and logic decision or making conclusion out of them. According to Hyslop-Margison (1999) to a make a sound conclusion it is essential to have knowledge. According to Zirkle (1998), leadership skills were seen very important by most lecturers in order to be develop in high institutions as part of the preparation to enter the workplace. Employers stated that planning and leading skills are essential, employees need to be independent and good at time management and manage priorities in order to survive because they know when to work alone and when to ask for support. Moreover, employees need to be able to manage time, manage self and work alone, be resourceful, make decision because they might be required to manage projects from conception to completion (Kazilan et. al., 2009). De Leon and Borchers (1998) found that 80% of employers agreed that the requirement to apply technologies to execute duties is extremely high.

In the workplace, employers in the job selection of recruitment of new employees, not only to look at the job competencies but to pay more attention to the quality of person in terms of honesty, real, positive attitude towards life is the cornerstone of competencies and the key factor of individual career success and development. Many employers stated that the structure of competency for career development includes two aspects of being a person and doing things, including: With people are good, polite, confident, optimistic, considerate, and do things including: proactive, clear thinking, team spirit and discipline. Employers believe that the ability to communicate, problem solving, and decision-making and self-management is not only necessary for all undergraduates, but also their general competencies or ability.

6. Conclusion

A high-quality education is essential for creating a sustainable human resources base upon which to develop a country. Brunei is experiencing a growing need for skilled professionals in a variety of fields. Investing in higher education will help to develop Brunei by infusing the economy with the innovation, knowledge, and technology needed to thrive in an interconnected, competitive world.

Graduates, universities, employers, and the government must all work together to improve graduate employability. Universities cannot guarantee employment for their graduates without collaboration with employers in any given sector. Students themselves have to make an effort to learn and acquire the knowledge and skills that have relevance in the respective industry in which they desire to work. Back to the root as a human being, the willingness of the individual to perform the task and show your full potential with your heart is the most crucial. In the Brunei culture, we always encourage young generation to serve and give their talents in their works as much as they spend on their favourite activities. There is always a solution to handle and overcome the issue with good communication and negotiation dialogue.

Government input is required to ensure that policies and economic conditions are favourable for employment opportunities in any industry. In view of the research analysis, all stakeholders, namely, the government, the university system, employers and graduates themselves must all endeavour to find a solution to the graduate competencies and some actions are as follows:

1) Government: Establish the professional consulting network for students or Job Centre/Employer Job Profile Guidebook. The guidebook has to include the job opportunity, requirements, skills they need, company profiles, how to apply and other important factors in each company. This guide can be distributed to the final year students at least 3-6 months before their graduation. Student will have a clear idea about company needs and selection criteria. Analyze the Employment Market and

according to this analysis, students have more chance to understand about their selection areas and future job security before the university entrance requirement.

2) Employer: On-campus recruitment and company presentations can be conduct in the university. Employers can recruit the best graduate with relevant competencies for their company.

3) Universities: Entrepreneurship development can be conduct during the undergraduate study period, university can arrange training program for students who have entrepreneurial ability. The final year students can organize the job fair or company visits and business-related lecture series with the support of companies. Undergraduates can understand the real business culture and get a real insight into the organization. Students view private sector job as being less secure than the government sector job. But practically, private sector job has faster opportunities for career advancement for the graduates than in the government sector. Organizing business-related lecture series mean inviting company managers to present their profile and show how graduates can be successful if joined their business. There also can be special lectures about communication, team building, interpersonal skills, negotiation skills, problem solving, conflict resolution, decision-making and career development. Curriculum and Practical Training will be designed to help students required to have a structured period of employment experience before graduating. They can learn how to apply the theoretical knowledge they gain and how to act or behave in the company or organization.

4) University student: Changing the attitudes regarding expectation for higher salary and higher position from the employers are needed. Changing attitude regarding instability of private sector job and more stability on government job is also needed. Acquire necessary competencies by investment more in training themselves. Keep oneself updated with the industry requirements and evaluation about company needs and specialization field. Practice and apply effectively, the knowledge acquired in the university.

Universities play an important role in reaching out to companies/departments and organizing related industrial attachments for their students. The collaboration between university and company will equip students with competencies for work and professional life. Universities must work closely with industry to ensure that graduates were better equipped with specific job competencies required for employment. Higher learning institutions can integrate career management skills, communicate skills and other soft skills crucial for employment into subjects and courses. Employers tend to put more emphasis on practical skills, so universities need to find ways to make education more practical in order to make graduates excel with a high GPA, at the same time, students should be able to demonstrate public relations skills, flexibility and multitasking. Close collaboration needs to be cultivated between

local universities and employers for the benefit of students. Hence, with the agreement between students and employers, the employers should provide professional training that is related to the courses taught in university.

Employers can consider offering students internship, apprenticeship, entrepreneurship training and mentoring opportunities, which could lead to a job upon graduation. Job placement services, career guidance, and labour market information can be provided by higher education institutions to prepare students for work after graduation. Universities should be creative and willing to offer more local-centric courses which address local industry needs. Employers emphasize the need for more courses that relate to industry need and demand. Course content must incorporate both the theoretical and practical, and the curriculum should be constantly kept up to date with industry need and demand.

Finally, various measures can be taken to help students transition into the workforce more smoothly. University experience can be improved, the recruitment process can be streamlined, more career events can be organized by universities, the performance of recently graduated employees can be tracked, and initiatives to understand the needs of employers can be taken. Universities should have regular evaluations of and timely feedback for its staff to promote the continuous improvement of the quality of education. In short, institutions of higher learning should, to the best of their abilities, improve the employability of students and support them in their career development.

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