

**BALANCING BORDERS AND BRIDGES: UNDERSTANDING THE
EMPLOYABILITY AMONG POLYTECHNIC GRADUATES**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother Hajah Siti Hatijah @ Halijah Omar, who have supported me all the way since the beginning of my studies and encourage me all the time.

Also, this thesis is dedicated to my siblings, Salmiza, Suhana, Mohd Shahar and Mohd Shahril and the rest of my family members in giving me support and courage from the start.

Finally, without the support from them, I may not have the strength in continuing my project and at last completing it.

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan di antara sifat, kemahiran dan juga kesesuaian tugas graduan bagi melihat kebolehpasaran dikalangan graduan lepasan politeknik Malaysia. Kajian “cross sectional” dilaksanakan kerana data diperolehi sekali pada satu masa dan data telah dikumpulkan daripada 98 orang pengurus sumber manusia yang berpengalaman mengambil pekerja yang terdiri daripada graduan politeknik. Hasil kajian ini mendapati kemahiran berpasukan dan kemahiran komunikasi adalah paling berkaitan dengan kebolehpasaran graduan politeknik. Faktor sifat, kemahiran mendengar dan kesesuaian tugas graduan terhadap pekerjaan tidak menunjukkan sebarang hubungan dengan kebolehpasaran graduan. Ini menunjukkan graduan politeknik harus mempersiapkan diri mereka dengan kemahiran-kemahiran yang diperlukan sebelum memasuki alam pekerjaan. Limitasi kajian ini adalah sukar untuk mendapatkan maklumbalas daripada pegawai sumber manusia di Pulau Pinang kerana responden mempunyai komitmen yang tinggi dengan kerja dan diharapkan pengkaji akan datang dapat mendapatkan faktor yang lebih memberi kesan kepada kebolehpasaran graduan dengan melihat kajian merentasi seluruh Malaysia. Kesimpulannya, hasil kajian ini dapat membantu pihak pengurusan politeknik serta mencari penyelesaian terbaik bagi menyediakan latihan dan kursus untuk penambahbaikan kebolehpasaran graduan politeknik. Disamping itu, graduan politeknik dapat menyumbang dan memenuhi permintaan pekerja separa professional di dalam negara.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationship amongst traits, skills and person job fit with the polytechnic graduates' employability. This study is a cross sectional study because the data were gathered at only one point in time. Data were collected from 98 human resource managers with an experience of hiring polytechnic graduates as sample of this study. The result of this study indicates that teamwork skill and speaking skill are significant to the employability of polytechnic graduates'. Traits, listening skill and person job fit is not significant and there is no relationship with polytechnic graduates' employability. This indicates that polytechnic graduates' needs to fulfil themselves with employability skills before entering the job market. The limitation for this study is the researcher had difficulties in getting respondent of human resource managers in Penang. The respondents were busy and have high commitment with work. Future research should find other factors on what are the impact and influence with employability from all over county in Malaysia. As a conclusion, this finding also helps the management of the polytechnic to find and look for the best solution to educate and to provide training or course to enhance polytechnic graduates' employability and they will contribute and to fulfil as semi-professional workers to the nation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the present study by highlighting the history of polytechnic Malaysia, background, problem statement, research objectives, and research questions, significance of the study and the organization of remaining chapters.

1.1 Polytechnic Malaysia: Background

Polytechnic education began in Malaysia with the establishment of the Ungku Omar Polytechnic, Ipoh in 1969 as the first polytechnic under the United Nations Development Plan. The need to provide wider access to technical education and training for the country was given prominence by the Cabinet Committee on Education in 1979 and in the First National Industrial Plan (1985-1995). In addition to decisions made by these committees, the Cabinet Committee on Training (1991) paved the way for the significant development in polytechnic education. As a result, there was an increase in the number of polytechnics built and these institutions were able to offer more programs of study to cater to the demands of more semi-professionals in the engineering, commerce and service sectors.

Previously polytechnics were managed by The Ministry of Education. Since March 2004, they are managed by The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). MOHE was established to enhance the quality of delivery of tertiary education with the birth of the Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education as one of the

department in the MOHE. On 4th January 2010 the management of Polytechnics and Community Colleges was divided into two departments and polytechnics are now managed by the Department of Polytechnic, Ministry of Higher Education. The total number of polytechnic in Malaysia since 1969 until 2010 is 27.

Polytechnic education offers technical, vocational and commerce courses for school leavers and certificate holders from polytechnics. The polytechnics produce skilled semi-professionals in engineering, commerce and service sectors at diploma and certificate levels to meet the demand of the public and private sectors.

The duration for certificate level courses is two years (four semesters) while the duration for diploma courses is three years (six semesters). Each student is required to undergo industrial training (for one semester or six months). Industrial training helps in exposing students to the real working environment and provides opportunities for students to relate theoretical knowledge to practical understanding. The training normally encompasses one semester, usually in the third semester at the certificate level and fourth semester at the diploma level.

1.2 Background of Study

Nowadays there are many countries faced with the economy downturn and Malaysia is one of those countries. Issues on employability have been discussed since the currency crisis in July 1997 until today. The number of jobs due to current economic situation and job demands has been decreased and that leads to the reduction of the employment rate.

Due to the economy downturn, the unemployment amongst the Malaysian graduates is increasing and it is still an issue in Malaysia. According to Aini Ideris

(2009), in a Seminar on employability “Enhancing Graduate Employability: Issues, Concerns and The Way Forward” held on 21-22 July 2009, one of the objectives is to produce competent graduate to fulfill manpower needs at least 75% in their fields within 6 months of their graduation. Based on Table 1.1, Post-Graduate Employment Status (6 Month after graduation) in 2006-2008, Prof Dato’ Ir Dr Radin Umar one of the speaker in the Seminar on employability (2008), presented that only 52.8% of the graduates from higher education institutions are employed after 6 months they graduated. The percentage shows that the objective has not been met.

Table 1.1

Post-Graduation Employment Status (6 Month after graduation) 2006-2008

	2006	2007	2008
Employed	44.5	48.4	52.8
Waiting for job placement	5.7	5.0	6.7
Yet to be employed	30.7	26.5	24.0

Source: Prof. Dato’ Ir. Dr. Radin Umar Radin Sohadi (2009), Graduate Employability: University-Industry Relationship and the Role of the Ministry of Higher Education.

As we can see, thousands of students graduated every semester from polytechnics, universities and other higher education institutions. The numbers of unemployed graduates is a concern to the higher education institutions. A Graduate Training Scheme was launched as an action taken by the government to reduce the number of unemployed graduates. The current problems are graduates are employed in non graduate jobs, they fail to portray themselves as graduates and they lack the language skills. The objective of the Training Scheme is to assist and equip unemployed graduates with specific skills to enhance their employability. (Utusan Malaysia 24 March 2005).

Despite having embedded soft skills in the polytechnic curriculum since 2006, together with the guideline for employment such as the way to write correct curriculum vitae, the problem still exists. The soft skills syllabus only consists of five competencies they aim to build individual positive personality, communication skills, to expose students to good working ethics and rules, to expose students to the real working environment and to produce a good report on their Industrial Training.

Polytechnics education study structure in Malaysia is divided into theoretical and practical as a preparation to meet the employer and nation need. As mention before, the duration for certificate level is two years and diploma level is three years and each student is required to undergo industrial training for six month before they completed their study. The industrial training is an added value to their knowledge and experience in their study.

1.3 Problem Statement

Global unemployment crisis is a concern to many countries including Malaysia due to economic downturn nowadays. Unemployment may occur as a result of the global economic crisis, political instability and other economic related factors. In Malaysia perspective the unemployment basically occurred due to global economy crisis. Table 1.2 shows the statistics of employment in Malaysia and Table 1.3 shows the percentage distribution of unemployed persons by tertiary educational attainment retrieved from official website of Department of Statistics Malaysia on 24 March 2010.

Table 1.2 *Statistic of employment in Malaysia in 2008 –2009.*

Employment	2008	2009
Labour Force ('000)	11,170.8	11,315.3
Employed ('000)	10,819.8	10,897.3
Unemployed ('000)	351.0	418.0
Unemployment Rate (% of Labour Force)	3.1	3.7
Labour Force Participation Rate (%) (% of working age population 15-64 years)	62.8	62.9

Source: Labour Force Survey, Department of Statistics, Malaysia

Table 1.3 *Percentage distributions of unemployed persons by tertiary educational attainment in year 2001 -2008.*

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Tertiary	14.8	18.3	18.9	20.9	23.6	24.5	25.1	24.9

Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia

As we can see, data produced by Department of Statistic in Table 1.2 shown that the unemployment rate for Malaysia in 2008 is 3.1 percent and in 2009 was increased to 3.7 percent. It clearly indicates that the Malaysia unemployment rate in 2009 increased by 0.6 percent. As shown in Table 1.3, unemployment persons by tertiary educational attainment from 2001 to 2008 shown the percentage was increased every year. Tertiary educational attainment as refers to those whose highest level of education is above Form 5 that has obtained degrees, diploma, STPM or equivalent. Statistics from the Department of Polytechnic shows output from the Polytechnic in 2009 was 31,426. Does

unemployment occurs due to employability issue but it shows that unemployment is an issue in Malaysia.

According to findings of a Graduate Tracer Study in 2006, 30.7% of graduates remained unemployed six months after convocation, while 5.7% were still awaiting job placement. The study involved 132 900 graduates from 18 public universities, 18 polytechnics, 34 community colleges and 13 private institutions of higher learning from all over Malaysia. Retrieved on 13 April 2010, (http://www.ikim.gov.my/v5/index.php?lg=1&opt=com_article&grp=2&sec=&key=1482&cmd=resetall).

Findings from Graduate Tracer Study that was conducted by MOHE in 2007 for UiTM, polytechnics, Community Collages, MLVK/IKM/IKBN/ILP graduates' who have graduated after six month found that 48.1 percent was working, 27.7 percent unemployed, 19.05 percent pursuing their studies and 5.0 percent was hunting for job and 1.2 percent to increased their skills. (Utusan Malaysia, 27 December 2008).

Total numbers of 22,355 polytechnic graduates who graduated in June and December 2006 participated in a Polytechnic Tracer Studies in 2007. 76.3% of the participants have joined the job market where 46.5% of them were employed and 29.8% was hunting for job. From the total number 22,355 polytechnic graduates only 10,393 were employed, where 63.4% are diploma holder while 36.6% are certificate holders. Based on this tracer study, the management meeting on 23 June 2008 agreed that urgent action should be taken about polytechnic graduate employability issue.

Findings from tracer study in 2009 conducted by MOHE shows that 50.6 percent polytechnic graduates' were able to get work after six month they graduated and 36.0

percent were unemployed. Table 1.4 data indicates that percentage of polytechnic graduates' employed in 2009 degradation compared to year 2007 and 2008.

Table 1.4 *Employment Status of polytechnic graduates in 2009*

Employment status	Polytechnic	
	Number	Percentage (%)
Employed	12,522	50.6
Pursuing study	2132	8.6
Improving skills	323	1.3
Hunting for job	874	3.5
Unemployed	8898	36.0
Total	24,749	100

Source: Higher Education Statistics 2009, MOHE

From previous tracer study conducted by MOHE and polytechnic shows that the percentage of employed polytechnic graduates do not meet the Ministry of Higher Education's objective which is to produce a pool of competent graduates to fulfill national and international manpower needs with 75% of the graduates employed in their relevant fields within six months upon their graduation. However, according to Prof Dato' Ir Dr Radin Umar Sohadi, (Director General, Higher Education Department, MOHE) in 2008, the employment rate amongst the Malaysian graduates is still low which it is reported to be at only 52.8% in 2008 after six months of their graduation. Amongst the factors contributed to the low percentage is due to the mismatch of their skills. In addition, this point was raised by Hj. Shamsuddin Bardan the Director of Malaysian Employers Federation at Seminar on employability Enhancing Graduate Employability: Issues, Concerns and The Way Forward. He further explain that from the employers' perspectives of local graduates are "skills mismatch as market move faster in globalised market, quality of graduates need to be improved intensively, lack of self-confidence

especially in mixing with the business community, lack of soft skills especially communication ability, lack of focus and being choosy and uncertain on jobs offered and job hopping in search of higher pay where experience and skills are still lacking.” Mr. Dhivendra Shantilai, a presenter in the National Industry Dialogue 2009, “Workforce Development in a Changing Market by Engaging Industries” further explain that Malaysian needs to produce more students who are competitive with technical and behavioral competency in workplace, able to communicate, articulate and present ideas, able to think out of the box . It is because companies are searching for young graduates who are creative and willing to be innovative. This is a challenge for the education institution to produce above mentioned characteristic graduates. (http://politeknik.gov.my/webjpp2/industri/files/nid_2009.pdf retrieved on 7 April 2010).

In an Industrial Dialogue held in October 2006 at Polytechnic Kota Bharu, comments and feedback from the industry were received regarding polytechnic graduates who have very good technical skills but lacking in soft skills. As a result of the comments, Department of Polytechnic, has revised the curriculum to inject more elements of soft skills. One of the mechanism used is to add one credit hour of soft skills module for all the courses and it is compulsory for the students to register and to pass prior of the industrial training. Unfortunately, there is not study conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the module. It is very crucial for polytechnic to have an overview about their graduates’ employability by looking at the relationship between their trait, skill and person job fit. It is because polytechnic is the institutions that producing semi-professional graduates and it also helps the government to fill jobs requiring semi-

professional workers to the nation. Therefore, it will draw a basic picture of the role of polytechnics in developing the nation.

1.4 Research objectives

There are three objectives designed for this study, which are:

- 1) to examine the relationship between traits (i.e., responsibility trait and integrity trait) and employability.
- 2) to examine the relationship between skills (i.e., listening skill, speaking skill and teamwork skill) and employability.
- 3) to examine the relationship between graduates' person job fit and employability.

1.5 Research questions

There are three questions designed for this study, which are:

- 1) Do traits (i.e., responsibility trait and integrity trait) affect employability among polytechnic graduates?
- 2) Do skills (i.e., listening skill, speaking skill and teamwork skill) affect employability among polytechnic graduates?
- 3) Do person job fit affect employability among polytechnic graduates?

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

There are five definition of key terms discuss in this present study there are trait, skill, person job fit, employability and polytechnic graduates.

1.6.1 Trait

Posner 2010 stated that there are various traits that make up a human being. They are the traits of human consciousness; or perhaps that call them the endowments of human character, or simply character or personality traits. They are grouped within the categories of an individual's (1) attitudes, (2) miscellaneous attributes, (3) social endowments, and (4) skills. Each trait is shown in two ways; how it manifests in a positive way in a person, and how it manifests negatively in a person. According to Schneider and Littrell (2003), though much research was done to identify the traits, no clear answer was found with regard to what traits were consistently associated with great leadership. Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson (2008, p. 67), defined attitudes are determinants of behavior because they are linked with perception, personality, feelings and motivation. Attitudes are intrinsic parts of a person's personality.

1.6.2 Skill

Skills not only include aspects of basic skills academic, but cover a variety of behaviors and attitudes. (Saterfield & M. Larty, 1995). According to Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson (2008, p.65), ability is a person's talent to perform a mental or physical task. Skills is a learned talent that a person has acquired to perform a task. The term basic skills is also used to denote the skills at a lower level or skills that are themselves a basis

for developing other skills (such as basic reading and writing). The term skills are used as shorthand for the individual components of competencies, such as knowledge, attitudes, motivations, etc. (Allen and van der Velden, 2005).

1.6.3 Person Job Fit

The “person-job fit” (P-J) or “job compatibility” model assumes worker effectiveness depends mainly on how well the specific strengths of the worker match the job requirements. Thus, some workers who have high cognitive skills may still not be a good fit for specific jobs, especially those jobs that require little job knowledge (Harris and Rutledge, 2007). Kristof-Brown and Amy L (2000), P-J fit is typically operationalized as the match between employee’s knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and job demands. According to Holloway (2003), “right person right job” means the right person for a job is the person most likely to excel in the job. The person most likely to excel is 1) one whose natural talents match those called for in the job and 2) one whose values and desired outcomes match those of the organization.

1.6.4 Employability

Hillage and Pollard, 1998 stated employability is about having the employability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required. More comprehensively employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers. According to Lees (2002), employability

is 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. In this present study, graduates are categorized involve with employability problem if they hard gaining employment after six month of their graduation.

1.6.5 Polytechnic Graduate

Graduates are any graduates who have registered as a student at the polytechnic in Malaysia and were graduated. This means that graduates have received a certificate or diploma at the convocation ceremony polytechnics. According to Ramli and Che Yaacob (2008), graduates should have the attitude that always strives to be better and more successful than their rivals or others. Graduates should have features such as accommodating either the employer or the work environment that is dynamic and enterprising.

1.7 Significance of Study

There are two significant of studies that have been highlighted in this present study. The first significant of study is for the country and to the polytechnic as the second contribution from this study.

1.7.1 Significant to the country

The polytechnics are producing semi-professional graduates for the country. This study wants to see why the polytechnic graduates are having problems with employability. The result is expected to help the nation to produce high quality semi-skilled graduates. According to the Ninth Malaysia Plan, the human capital development is important and polytechnic can help to produce educated youth and it can become a world-class education center with first-class mentality graduates.

1.7.2 Significant to the polytechnic

These results can help to produce quality graduates and the polytechnics will be recognized as producer of high quality human capital at the national level. In addition, companies or agencies will believe in a polytechnic product while viewing the capabilities of the polytechnic as a whole. Therefore, polytechnics will be able to establish the competence lecturers indirectly.

These findings could also help the management of the polytechnic to find the real factors that caused unemployment among graduates. This study will benefit the major stakeholders such as students, polytechnics, government, industries and society. The study is also important to minimize the rate of unemployment and to achieve the objective set by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Finally, this study will assist polytechnic in redesigning their curriculum to solve the employability issue if there is any significant or relationship between traits, skills and person- job fit and employability.

1.8 Organization of the Chapters

The current study is organized as follows. The next chapter deals with literature review of the topic to understand the concept of dependent and independent variable. It forms the “base line” for the present study and helps to develop the theoretical framework and hypotheses. Chapter 3 illustrates the methodology used in the present study which provides the sample and unit analysis, data collection method, measurements and statistical analysis method. Chapter 4 contains discussion and findings. Chapter 5 contains the discussion and implication of the study as well as the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will look at what has been said by previous researchers about the traits, skills, person job fit and employability. Expectancy theory has been referred for the theoretical framework and hypotheses development. The aim of this study is to find the real factors that affect the graduates' employability.

According to Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson, (2008, p.61), "organization select employees on the basis of the needs the organization has. Needs refer not only to skills and abilities but also to individual attributes such as values and personality."

"Rising trend in graduate unemployment especially after the deep economic recession experienced by the Malaysian economy precipitated by the East Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 has become a national issue. Policy makers, academic administrators, stakeholders and the public alike are greatly concerned with graduates employability or a lack of it. A lack of employability has a negative impact on the ability of the graduates to obtain employment."(Alias, Kefeli and Ahmad, 2007). According to Hasan 2008, it is suggested that both employers and universities have an important role in developing the skills needed in the workplace. Thompson, 2001 found that the five most important entry level skills or personality traits that employers seek are responsibility traits, integrity traits, listening skills, speaking skills and teamwork skills. Findings by Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990 in Metzler & Hamilton (2002, p.10),s show that "research indicates that P-J Fit is strongly related to job performance and

satisfaction, and the selection based on P-J Fit is suitable to a wide variety of jobs and organizations. According to Cable and DeRue (2002) cited in Ballout, P-J fit was strongly related to their career satisfaction and occupational commitment. The researcher chose responsibility trait, integrity trait, listening skill, speaking skill, teamwork skill, and person job fit as independent variables based on these antecedents of employability as stated above.

2.1 Trait

Previous study findings by Thompson 2001, show that “‘Responsibility Traits’ category was rated the highest by the respondents and indicates that these employers seek hard-working entry-level candidates who are dependable in regard to attendance and punctuality and integrity traits was the worker is honest and trustworthy and consistently follows the rules established in the workplace and in society.”

Previous studies have shown the importance of traits in the selection of employees. Therefore, traits have been selected as one of the factors to determine the graduate employability.

From an employer’s viewpoint, there is ample evidence to indicate on job training affect both organizational and individual performance and the ability to take responsibility. (Wright and Belcourt, 1996). According to Raybould and Sheedy 2005, Graduates sometimes find that smaller businesses have the opportunity to offer more responsibility and a wider range of experiences in the early stages of their career.

Dench (1997) argues that “employers are generally looking for individuals who can demonstrate three types of skills that are personal attributes, personal skills and

technical skills. Personal attributes include honesty, reliability and integrity, personal skills encompass communication, being capable of working with others, taking responsibility and making decisions, negotiating and problem solving while technical skills refer to skills gained through education and experience”.(Clarke, 2008, p. 264)

Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson (2008, p. 67), defined “attitudes are determinants of behavior because they are linked with perception, personality, feelings and motivation. Attitudes are intrinsic parts of a person’s personality.”

Integrity is an action – not just words – that display honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, ethics and high moral standards that are vital demonstrators of a good leader. (Drouillard and Kleiner, 1996, p. 31). According to Fitsimmons, 2008 p. 25, a person of true integrity is completely honest. His or her loyalties are not divided. A person with true integrity will always want to do the best, it means they will put forth of the effort to be what it takes to be the best they can be on the job. Nabi (2003) cited in Chung & Yet (2009, p.95), graduate employability is largely referred to as a graduate possession of certain level of skills and attitudes. Chung & Yet (2009, p.95) added graduates whose skills and attitudes are highly valued by employers would definitely succeed in paving their way into the labour market. Quah, Nasurdin, Guok, & Ignatius (2009), the survey results found that employers in the northern parts of Peninsular Malaysia indicate that the generic skills and generic traits are important to them when recruiting fresh graduates for entry-level job. Previous literature approved that traits and skills are important element for employee and added value perceived by the employer on their employee to get a job.

2.2 Skill

Recruiting employees at entry-level not only refer to the attributes but also skills and abilities. According to Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson (2008, p.65), “ability is a person’s talent to perform a mental or physical task. Skills is a learned talent that a person has acquired to perform a task.”

“Advance technical skills coupled with well developed generic skills such as creative thinking, problem solving and analytical skills are greatly needed by the employer in industry in order to meet the challenges faced by industry”.(Singh&Singh,2008, p.15).

According to Thompson 2001, there are five workplace competencies, that are resources, interpersonal skills, information, systems and technology and three skills foundation skills; basic skills, thinking skills and personal qualities. The findings shown that teamwork skill is the most important followed by listening skills and speaking skills.

Few individuals are trained in the development of listening skills. Leadership and decision making are as much the art of listening as the skill of doing. Listening to customer and translating what is heard into an action plan is a mark of successful organization. (Scarnati, 1998).

According to Jacobsen (1993) cited in Quek (2005, p.232) generic competencies are described as success skills in employees that are needed to transfer learning from the classroom to the workplace for fulfilling work demands. Quek (2005, p.233), employing graduates who did not have generic competencies become added liability to the corporation. They add more costs to employers who had to finance the retraining of the

employees to address the mismatch between work demands and improving the generic competencies of employees.

If graduates refuse to change and do not add value to themselves with skills and personality traits, they will find it hard to get a job. This is supported by graduates who were not taught explicitly generic competencies; skills, ability and attributes to complement their areas of specialisation. They were unable to cope and survive in the world of work and these graduates faced difficulty in employment.

The findings from Quek (2005 p.233), shown that there is high and significant loading of interpersonal skills comprising teamwork ability followed by oral skills, leadership skills and reporting skills with graduate employment.

Both the graduates and organisations regarded oral communication as the most important work-readiness skill for new employees. (Raftopoulos, Coetzee and Visser, 2009). This skill is crucial across all levels of employment. Employers interviewed advised they felt communication skills contributed to a harmonious workplace and better customer relations. Communication skills, such as listening, talking, writing, negotiating, and empathising were most frequently mentioned. The interviewees advised that the indicators of communication required would vary across jobs (Mc Leish, 2002).

A teamwork skill is the ability to function effectively as an individual and in a group with the capacity to be a leader or manager as well as effective team leader. (Zaharim, Md Yusoff, Omar, Mohamed, Muhamad, & Mustapha, 2009, p.308). A team is formed where the players augment and complement each other. (Drouillard and Kleiner, 1996, p-32). According to Mc Leish 2002, employers emphasised the importance of team work as it contributed to workplace relations and productivity.

Employees must be able to work as members of a team and in small partnerships with each other as well as with the clients.

They need to embrace themselves with suitable skills more than what they have to gain, to stay competitive in the market place and aware of the expectations of the potential employers.

2.3 Person Job Fit (P-J Fit)

P-J Fit is defined as the compatibility between a person's characteristics and those of the job or tasks that are performed at work (Sekiguchi, 2007). According to Edwards in Sekiguchi (2004, p.179), P-J Fit refers to the match between the abilities of a person and the demands of a job or the desires of a person and the attributes of a job. "P-J Fit is concerned with finding a match between the skills, knowledge and abilities needed to perform the relatively static technical aspects of a job and individuals who have these abilities.

The concept of person-job fit is the traditional foundation for employee selection based on Werbel & Gillian, 1999 cited in Sekiguchi (2004, p. 183). P-J Fit can also produce good results in high job proficiency; work is likely to be accomplished quickly and with higher quality. (Werbel and Johnson, 2001, p. 230).

According to Sekiguchi (2004 p. 183-184), the primary concern in employee selection has been with finding those applicants who have the skills and abilities necessary to do the job. Traditionally P-J Fit is assessed by determining the demand of the job through a job analysis, which identifies to perform the job task. P-J Fit can be defined as the fit between the abilities of a person and the demand of a job or the desires

of a person and the attributes of a job. When P-J Fit is accessed as the match between what an employee wants and receives from performing job, it is correlated with improved job satisfaction, adjustment and organizational commitment as well as reduced intentions to quit.

According to Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson (2008, p.76), “once into a job, individuals who work hard at the “fit” are likely to experience higher level of job satisfaction, more positive attitudes, and better relationships among peers.”

2.4 Employability

In 19th century, there were no issues about employability for graduate student. The company or employers were already offering jobs that meet their qualification even before they finished their studies. There were plenty of jobs in the market and the demand for workers is higher than supply. It offered students many choices in picking their career. Nowadays, as far as employment is concern, the issue of graduate employability has always been associated with graduate marketability and competency. According to Fallows and Steven in Collins, Hannon and Smith 2004 said that “the world of employment is changing permanence and longevity of employment is no longer a significant feature of career path: traditional paths have disappeared.”

Tracer Study Polytechnic 2007 shows that 32% from respondent were unemployed after 6 month of finishing their studies and 88% were still looking for jobs. So, actions need to be taken by the polytechnic to improve the relevancy of their student to be marketable in job market. There were two main reasons as to why graduates’ who were already working still look for new jobs. The reasons were graduate’s looks for

permanent job and higher income. Respondents who were still unemployed after 6 months at their graduation is 33.6% and from that rate 45.4% is male and 54.6% is female and 71.4% of them has interview experience. The academic performance is not the prerequisite to be employed. The statistic had showed that graduates with CGPA of 2.49 and below represent only 1.4% of the unemployment rate. From the tracer study 83.7% of the unemployed graduates had a CGPA of 2.5-3.49. Almost all of the students 88.1% were still looking for job and only 6% were not interested in working.

Students who graduated from a higher education institutions are no longer a symbol of success. The days have passed when graduate students could automatically get employed. In the past two decades, if we had proper qualifications it meant that we do not have to worry about career development. This situation has changed after 1997, when there were a surplus of graduate students as compared to a deficit and demand in employment. At this moment the world was facing an economic crisis. (When economic downturn, the number of unemployment increase effected from labour market.)

Brown *et al* (2003 p. 10) said “when job are plentiful finding employment is relatively easy, when there are few jobs employers can afford to be much more selective in deciding the level of skills, qualifications and experience that will determine whether a seemingly employable person is able to fine employment”. (Clarke, 2008, p.269).

According to Zhang (2006) in Zhiwen and Van der Heijden (2008, p. 291) “employers are dissatisfied with current graduates performance that have high exam scores yet low ability and transferable skills”. “Besides that, everybody says there are a lot of factor that might influence or impact the employability among graduate students. In their opinion might think because of changing of economy structure, quality of

education, choosy job seekers for example candidates expecting job offer with package like good pay, conducive working environment, normal shift hour, lack of guidance from parents or lecturers and choosy employers such as every advertisement need working experience, limitation of age and maybe certain skills like good Chinese and English languages is needed”.

“Employability means that a person possesses the capability to acquire the skills to do the required work, not necessarily that they can do the work immediately and without further training.”(Cox & King, 2006, p. 263). “Employability means being employed that is an individual has a job, whereas being employable refers to having the attributes necessary to sustain employment and thrive in workplace.” (Yaqin, 2009).

Sharon and King (2006) added “Education at graduate level with the emphasis on developing critical and analytical thinking in a student rather than didactic knowledge develops a student’s general employability rather than enhancing their prospect to direct employment in a specific job.”

Gamboa, Gracia, Ripoll, & Peiro (2009), said “employability refers to how suitable a worker’s preparation and qualifications are to the demands of the labour market, being maintained by continuous training, which allows the worker to obtain good job easily”.

Dearing (1997) cited in Singh & Singh (2008, p.18), ““employability” the ability of graduates to gain employment appropriate to their educational standards”. Mason, Williams & Cramer (2006) cited in Singh & Singh (2008, p.18), from employers perspective “employability” seems to refer to “work readiness” that is possession of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will enable new graduates

to make productive contributions to organizational objectives soon after commencing employment.

Zhiwen and Beatrice (2008) said that “The recruitment difficulties that affect many sectors appear to be mainly the result of a lack of employability, more specifically a mismatch between graduates’ capabilities and labour market demands. Choosy job a seeker or the job they do is not related to their studies and this is why many students that graduate from polytechnics are still gone for interviews, seeking a new job. “It is also an evident that graduates often find it difficult to start their careers and that there is an oversupply of graduates in an increasing number of subject areas or vocations. The choice of degree subjects is affected to some extent by prevailing fashion and universities have been enterprising in responding to this.”

According to Zhiwen and Beatrice (2008), “Employability enhancement should be an integrated activity that is undertaken in close collaboration between different parties. Its success and effectiveness depends upon the quality of a curriculum that is developed in line with current employability requirements.”

Institutions of higher education also need to understand and know whether the courses they offer is marketable or not. (Is it relevant to the market or not). Student sometimes do not know the prospect of the course they took and the job opportunities for the course. Rea (2007) stated that “The problem is that employability is not an outcome of any one module of a course but rather a result of a holistic learning experience.”

According to Baxter and Young in Singh (2008) “employers need entry level workers who are dependable and trustworthy, have basic communication, thinking and problem solving skills and have desire to learn and advance, the ability to work as part of