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Employer's Perspective Towards Industrial Training Students of Commerce Department, Polytechnic Sultanah Tuanku Bahiyah

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Abstract: Industrial training is a requirement for the acknowledgement of Diploma Polytechnic Malaysia. Vast and varied knowledge and skills are acquired by the students while going through the industrial training. The purpose of this study is to gauge the perspective of the employers towards the industrial training students of the Commerce Department from Polytechnic Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah (PTSB). The study is conducted through survey forms developed by Unit Pengurusan Latihan Industri (UPLI). The questions are in relations to the employer's perspective towards the industrial trainees in terms of technological literacy, effective communication, teamwork, policies, procedures and regulations, professional ethics and reporting skills. Analysis through the responding data of 375 employers on 375 of the students in the 2019June and December sessions using the percentage and mean score, each one of the aspects were calculated to be above 80% with the mean score of 4.00 to 5.00. Results from this research indicates that employers are content with the performance of the industrial training students of the Commerce Department, Polytechnic Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah in all aspects of the skills required while undergoing the industrial training.

Keywords: Industrial training, employer's perspective, technological literacy, effective communication, teamwork, policies, procedures and regulations, professional ethics and reporting skills.

1. Introduction

Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah (PTSB) is the 16th polytechnic under Jabatan Pengajian Polytechnic and Kolej Komuniti, Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia. PTSB offers diploma studies through 4 academic departments, namely the Civil Engineering Department, Electrical Engineering Department, Mechanical Engineering Department and the Commerce Department. Consequently, the Commerce Department offers 3 programs under its program which are Diploma of Accountancy (DAT), Diploma of Business Studies (DPM) and Diploma in Marketing (DPR). These diploma programs require 5 semesters of academic lectures and a semester of industrial training on the last semester which lasts for 20 weeks.

Industrial training is a requisite for all polytechnics diploma programs. The industrial training course is introduced to solidify the competency required in aspects of marketability of students, giving exposures and experience to students in terms of development of technologies, effective communication, work ethics, teamwork, policies, procedures and regulations, professional perspective and reporting. This course is slate to build spirit and proactive attitude within the students and subsequently would elevate their sense of confidence to become successful graduates. (Industrial Training Guideline (Students), 2013).

According to Othman, Ramli & Sukor (2017), industrial training functions as a platform for students in the academic world to incorporate their knowledge in theory with real working environment as a basic learning curve. Industrial training is a course that is implemented by placing a student in an organization to undergo a chosen industrial practice whether it is done in the country or overseas in a predetermined amount of time before they are rewarded a Certificate, Diploma or a Bachelor's Degree. Throughout the training, they will be placed under a supervisor representing the industry for further instructions process and to monitor the students' performances.

This study is crucial to attain the feedbacks of the employers on the performance of the students under their supervision. With this information, will be able to determine the necessities and requirements of the industries from the students, and will simultaneously boost their marketability. Apart from that, through this study, aspects that are emphasized by the industry is recognized, and planning at the polytechnic level such as organizing programs that involves students actively participating in arranging and designing the programs can be implemented. This is to increase values of the students by instilling improved skills prior to their industrial training. Therefore, the objective of

this study is to recognize the perspective of the employers towards the students of Commerce Department in terms of technological literacy, effective communication, teamwork, policies, procedures and regulations, professional ethics and reporting. Through this study, data shows the employers are satisfied with the 375 industrial training students from the Commerce Department (Osman & Kamis, 2019). The department achieved more than 80% with mean score of 4.00 to 5.00. The study paper is arranged by literature review, methodology, results, conclusions and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

Industrial training is a platform to students to gain experience and advanced knowledge along with the development of technology while applying their own knowledge and would be an added experience for the students (Okoye & Edokpolor, 2021). This means that industrial training can help build character and assist in developing their self-image and can subsequently increase their soft skills while undergoing the practical training. Findings from Othman (2018) shows the satisfaction of the employers in the aspect of technological literacy and communication skills are adequate but can always use room for improvements for the students to be able to produce quality reporting.

Through study by Abd Rahman et al (2015), the level of satisfactions from the employers are generally dependent on four main focus in their study which are, command of knowledge, person ability and self-discipline, generic skills and soft skills such as communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, the ability to work in teams and moral ethics and professionality. Apart from that, employers require trainees who are not only adept in technical skills but working skills as well.

The study on the effectiveness of industrial training for the students of Diploma Perhotelan, Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka shows that the skills emphasized most by the employers are communication skills, problem solving skills and the ability to work well in teams. These are crucial factors and are much needed skills to increase the rate of marketability of students after they graduate (Dzia-Uddin, 2020)

Effective communication is a crucial aspect that employers expect from their workers or industrial trainees. Study by Norman et al (2017) reveals that in the graduate employment selection process, employers emphasize on communication skill as well as the ability to work well with others. This is because this form of communication skills includes verbal skills, writing skills, listening skills and positive attitude towards others. Meanwhile, study by Mohd Makhbul, Yussof & Awang (2015) shows the gap between the current graduate and workers are communication and interpersonal skills where the employers' assumptions are that graduates have not reach the expected level. This is followed by ethics and values, thinking skills, leadership, decision making and problem solving, teamwork, work planning and other skills (Mohd Najid et al., 2019). The students' performance in terms of their technological literacy is considered almost on par with the employers' requirement in the future. The implication of this study is important to the institution and law maker in the effort to improve the nation's education system through measures that can be taken to lessen the gap of skills that were aforementioned (.Olutola & Olatoye, 2020).

Based on the analysis gathered by Othman, Ramli & Sukor (2017), it shows that the industries involved are satisfied with the polytechnic industrial training students in two aspects that were studied which are: the mastering of knowledge and generic skills. Apart from that, employers are also discovered to require trainees that are not only technically skilled but also have apt working and communication skills and possess a good command of current technology.

3. Methodology

This study involves a total of 375 employers towards 375 industrial training students from Commerce Department, PTSB from the June and December 2019 sessions. The students consist of 151 students from Diploma of Accountancy (DAT), 111 students from Diploma of Marketing (DPR) and 113 students from the Diploma of Business Studies (DPM). The breakdown of students is shown as such:

Table 1: Total of Industrial Training Students

Program/ Session	June 2019	December 2019	Total
DAT	35	116	151
DPM	37	74	111
DPR	36	77	113

Data is collected quantitatively using the employers' feedback forms to assess the industrial training. The form is presented in the students' daily logs and are filled by the employers at the end of the industrial training. These forms are either mailed, faxed, or emailed to Unit Perhubungan dan Latihan Industri (UPLI) PTSB after the students have completed their training. The evaluation is presented in the form of the Likert scale as such:

Table 2: Likert scale chart

Score	Evaluation
1	Unsatisfied
2	Below average
3	Average
4	Good
5	Excellent

For the purpose of this study, data was analyzed using the 20.0 version of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. In order to achieve the objective of the study, the percentage and mean score analysis was used to monitor the perspective of the employers towards the industrial training students. According to Landell (1997), the interpretation range of mean score is as such:

Table 3: Mean Interpretation Table

Mean Score	Indication Level
1.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.67	Medium
3.68 – 5.00	High

Six aspects that are studied from the perspective of the employers:

- Technological Literacy – Able to execute tasks in a hands-on manner, use of tools and equipment, adaptability with technologies, knowledge applications in performing tasks, show of improvements in knowledge and the skills to think creatively and critically.
- Effective communication – Able to receive and process information, execute instructions, analyze direct and indirect information, communicate verbally and non-verbally suitable with all level of employees in the company and the basic negotiation ability.
- Teamwork – Have a positive personality, actively involved in group activities, perform tasks in suitable and positive situations and sustain amiable relationships within groups.
- Policies, procedures and regulations – Adhere to the policies, the organizations' rules, work procedures and safety and health regulations.
- Work Ethics – Submitting approved reports within the allocated time given by the supervisors, independent, excellent attendance record, punctuality and a good problem-solving ability.
- Reporting – Convey ideas and suggestions and the reporting of duties.

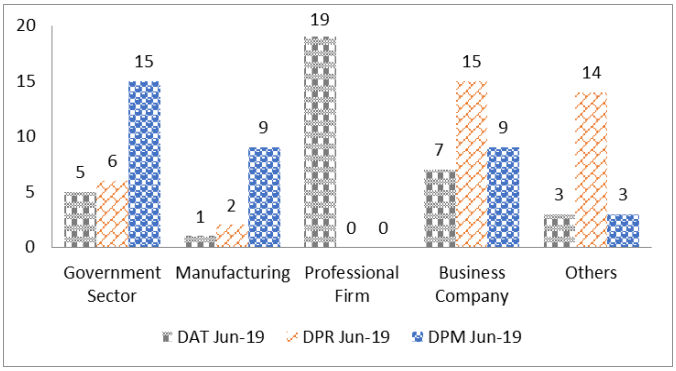
4. Findings and Discussion

Based on the placement of the industrial training students, employers are placed into 5 categories which are the government sector, manufacturing, professional firms, business and others. Data acquired by employers are presented in Table 4 as such:

Table 4: Types of Employers in Industrial Training

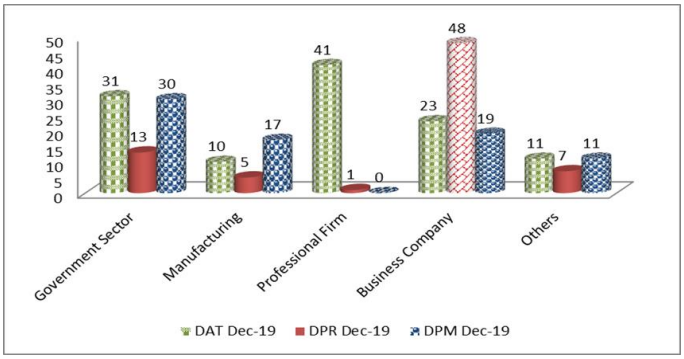
Employer	DAT		DPR		DPM	
	June 19	Dec 19	June 19	Dec 19	June 19	Dec 19
Government Agencies	5	31	6	13	15	30
Manufacturing	1	10	2	5	9	17
Professionals Firm	19	41	0	1	0	0
Business	7	23	15	48	9	19
Others	3	11	14	7	3	11

The number of employers in the December 2019 is higher compared to the June 2019 numbers based on the number of students who went to for the industrial training. There are also employers who employed multiple students from the same program.



Graph 1. Types of employers for June 2019 industrial training session

Graph 1 shows the number of employers for the 2019 June session. The employers from the Professional Firms recorded the highest number however only students from the DAT program that went to these firms. This is followed by employers from business sector followed by the government sector, others and lastly, the manufacturing sector.



Graph 2. Types of employers for December 2019 industrial training session

For the December 2019 session, as indicated by Graph 2, most employers are from the business sector, followed by the government sector, professional firms, manufacturing and others.

Even though both industrial training session contain different number of students, the employer's trend is similar with the majority of DAT student undergoing their training at professional firms such as accounting firms, taxes or audit firms and not many opt for the manufacturing sector. On the other hand, most students from the DPR program went for their industrial training at business companies while DPM students leaned more towards government agencies.

4.1. Employers' Perspective Towards the Industrial Training Students

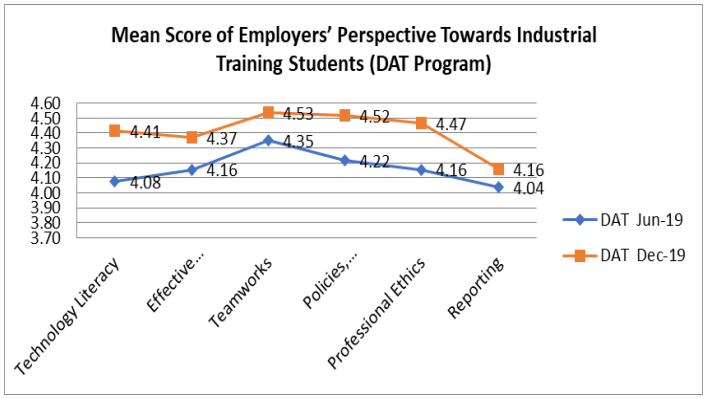
Table 5 below is the resulting analysis which shows the employers' perspective towards the performance of industrial training students from the commerce department for the June 2019 and December 2019 session according to programs.

Table 5: Percentage of employers' perspective towards industrial training students

Evaluation Items	Employers' perspective percentage (%)					
	DAT		DPM		DPR	
	June 19	Dec 19	June 19	Dec 19	June 19	Dec 19
Technological Literacy	81.57	88.28	88.65	89.25	87.27	90.14
Effective Communication	83.14	87.40	87.57	89.67	96.36	86.77
Teamwork	87.06	90.69	91.89	91.49	93.94	90.67
Policies, Procedures and Regulation	84.31	90.31	87.57	88.58	91.52	89.37
Professional Ethics	83.14	89.34	89.73	87.37	88.48	89.89
Reporting	80.78	83.24	87.57	84.99	91.52	83.92

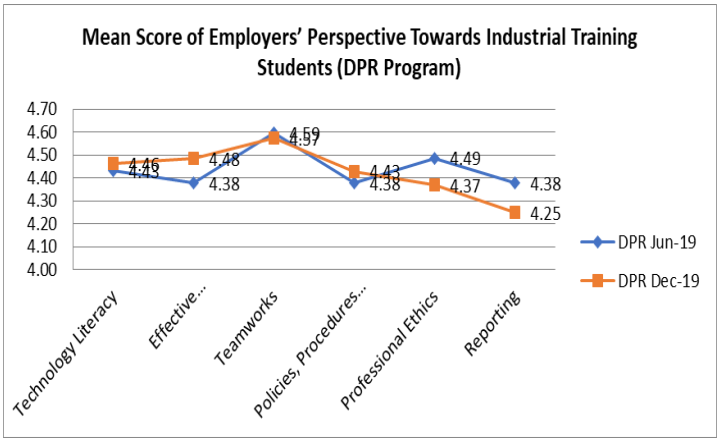
Overall, every aspects that were evaluated were considered excellent amounting to more than 80% in total. This indicates that the employers are satisfied with the students from the Commerce Department for both of the session that were studied. The highest number given by the employers was for teamwork while the lowest number reported was in the reporting aspect.

To look at the employers' perspective in more detail with the mean score, every aspect was divided by program and training session as indicated by the graph and following elaboration.



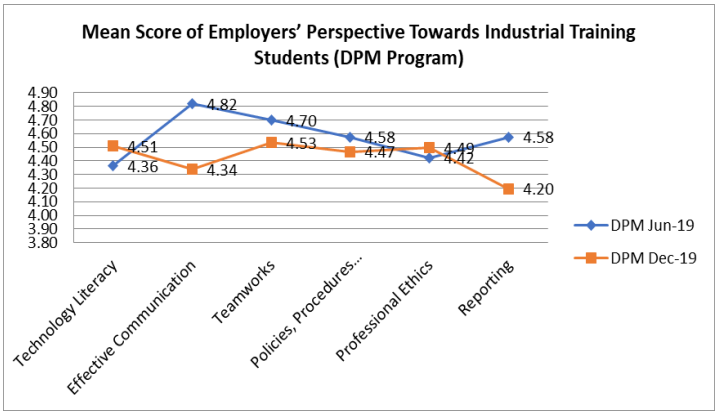
Graph 3. Mean Score of Employers' Perspective Towards Industrial Training Students (DAT Program)

The results for DAT students which is shown in the above graph indicates that employers are very satisfied with their performance with the min score of 4.53 (2019 June session) and 4.35 (2019 December session). There were numerous activities inside and outside of the classroom that required the DAT students to work in groups. These activities significantly help in developing team working skills and high tolerances between students. The second performance considered by the employers for DAT students is the adherence to policies, procedures and regulations with the mean score of 4.52 (2019 June session) and 4.22 (2019 December session). DAT students are constantly being exposed to adherence to policies, standards, formats, and the regulations within the curriculum. That is the reason they are sensitive towards instructions and are very compliant to set rules. The following perspective by employers are work ethics, technological literacy, effective communication and reporting. Focus should be on the effective communication and good reporting technique as it is the lowest number of evaluations given by the employers of the industrial training.



Graph 4. Mean Score of Employers' Perspective Towards Industrial Training Students (DPR Program)

Based on Graph 4, DPR students also acquired the highest evaluation in terms of teamwork with the mean score of 4.59 (2019 June session) and 4.57 (2019 December session). DPR students are also known to be familiar with doing group activities in completing tasks and projects and they are also known to be active in participating in programs organized by the department and by polytechnic. That is the main reason that they can handle tasks well and work effectively in a group. The second highest performance that was evaluated by the employers is professional ethics with mean score 4.49 for 2019 June session and for the second highest evaluation for the 2019 December session is effective communication with a in score of 4.48. DPR students are also always groomed with good values and ethics to communicate with customers. These are all the values that can be implemented while undergoing their industrial training. The employers also gave a high evaluation for DPR students in the aspect of technological literacy. DPR students are often given tasks that co-relates with digital marketing techniques. They have to always be aware with the development and advancement of technologies in order to be able to come up with creative and effective marketing solutions (Agus & Samuri, 2018). These skills that were honed while studying is applicable to their practical training.



Graph 5. Mean Score of Employers' Perspective Towards Industrial Training Students (DPM Program)

Referring to the above graph, DPM students shows an excellent performance in terms of effective communication for the June 2019 session (mean score 4.82) and teamwork for the December 2019 session (mean score 4.53). DPM curriculum consists of various exposures in relations to communication techniques and presentation sessions for specific courses which are usually done in groups. Through these activities, they were trained with good communication deliveries and commitment in working together within groups to complete tasks.

The Commerce Department students are also exposed to activities that involves teamwork and various programs organized at the department level that involves all students such as the 'Commerce Week', the 'Polylimpik' sports program, academic visits, programs with Academic Advisor and the year-end banquet and multiple public service programs.

There are clubs established to co-ordinate programs and activities that involves students within the department. The establishment of the Commerce Club have proven effective in training leadership capabilities and cultivate good teamwork culture within students of the Commerce Department. Subsequently, they are able to actively involve themselves while playing their own roles effectively and able to work with other people when the time comes for them to go for their industrial training.

Based on the overall performance evaluated. DAT, DPM and DPR students received the lowest percentage in the reporting aspect. DAT with a mean score of 4.10, DPM with a mean score of 4.39 and DPR with 4.31 respectively. This feedback shows there is still something lacking in the students of the Commerce Department in producing good reporting. This also correlates with the final report submitted at the end of the industrial training. Language structure, formats, and writing ideas are considered to be quite weak with most of the students receiving average score for their written reports. This needs to be given extra attention by the polytechnic. Students require a closer guidance in terms of report writing and writing quality in every task should also be given more emphasize.

5. Conclusion

Employers are generally satisfied with the performance of industrial students from the commerce department where they score in average of above 80% with the mean score of 4.00 to 5.00. Students showcase good discipline and ethics and are able to communicate effectively and are capable in completing tasks and assignments. This positive perception mirrors the fact that students have a high marketability and competitiveness in the real working environment in the future.

Results from this study is useful for the polytechnic for future planning of programs and strategies to elevate the weaker performance aspects within the students of industrial training. For instance, organizing writing workshops with emphasize on the aspect of good reporting technique and creating quality work and tasks. Apart from that, other aspects to evaluate have to be elevated in terms of excellence so that the employers continue to have faith in the ability of the industrial training students.

As this study is done only on the industrial training student of the commerce department, it does not mirror the real perspective of the employers on the general students of PTSB as a whole. It is recommended that in the future, a more comprehensive and inclusive study could be done to the entire industrial training students of PTSB from all programs or comparison between programs can be conducted among the programs in PTSB. Apart from that, study can be broadened to include feedbacks from employers towards industrial training student's performances from the polytechnics according to respective zones or the same program from polytechnics all over Malaysia.

While there are varying aspects that are emphasized by the employers while undergoing the industrial training, this study only focuses on only 6 aspects so it is recommended that study in the future can be widen by shifting focus on other factors like generic skills, students' self-appearance, problem solving skills and their creativity of the students in completing given tasks. The data collected from the study such as this can be used reference for the polytechnic and further improvement steps can be taken to increase their performance for future industrial training students.

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