

STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY – ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD) UNITS IN THE BACHELOR OF BUSINESS

Alagarani . A ^a, Maria De Sensi ^b, Dr Benedict Valentine Arulanandam ^c

^{ac}Sunway Education Group, Malaysia

^bVictoria University, Melbourne, Australia

Corresponding email: alagarania@sunway.edu.my

Abstract

Graduate employability seems to be a challenging task not only for the graduates themselves, but to universities, colleges and governments as well. Each year thousands of graduates flood the job-market with such high expectations (Shelley, 1994), hoping that what has been taught at the universities and colleges has some bearing on the assurance of landing a job, more so with a high-paying employment. However, with the altering landscape within industries, employers have different ideas and a varying set of yardstick on certain skills to meet with the business needs (Perrone and Vickers, 2003). Hence, graduates may be left with a variations of skills acquired during tertiary education and the needs of the market at the point in time, resulting in a mismatch. Studies have revealed that many universities and colleges across the globe have made surmountable efforts in developing the necessary skills for their students to meet with the ever demanding job market (Harvey 2005; Higher Education Funding Council for England 2003; Yorke, 2004). Koh et al (2013) emphasized that some institutions of higher learning have made “students employability” a cardinal function. There have been syllabuses improvements, quality assurance in universities and colleges, dialogue sessions with employers and other initiative, leading to the narrowing of these gaps of expectation.

Subsequently, such employability expectations cannot be ignored in the Victoria University’s Business program. Off late, there has been an impetus call to review the effectiveness of a crucial module within the Victoria University’s Bachelor of Business (VUBB), which is the Professional Development Units (also known as Business Challenge Units), which drives students to acquire and demonstrate soft skills and cognitive ability in the midst of business dynamics. Hence, the purpose of this study is to birth the opportunity to formally evaluate the curriculum of this module and the need to improve, if any, to meet the business subtleties, with regards to employability skills, both in Malaysia and Australia. This study includes students from VUBB Malaysia and Australia. Such novelty of research between the two geographical locations has not been conducted before. Furthermore, to date, there has hardly been any formal research to identify the gaps within the curriculum structure with that of its appropriateness in meeting the current demands of employers. This study also takes into account the cultural differences, demographics and skills appropriateness in both countries. The methodology of this research is by adopting samples from Alumni Associations of both Sunway College and Victoria University, involving a sample size of five hundred. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis would be applied in order to have a much vigorous results. The findings will denote the areas of improvements in the professional development unit offered to be of relevance to the current industrial needs.

Keywords: Employability, Skills, Malaysia, Australia, Business Challenge Units.
