



Interest and Confidence of Hearing-Impaired Students toward Vocational Education: A Preliminary Study

*Asnul Dahar Minghat**, *Siti Azwanee Abdullah*, *Yusri Kamin*
Mohd Zolkifli Abd Hamid, *Mohd Faizul Mohd Zulkifli*

Faculty of Education
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

*Corresponding author: asnul@utm.my

ABSTRACT

This preliminary study was conducted to examine hearing-impaired students regarding their interest and confidence toward vocational education. A sample of 127 hearing-impaired students in special vocational schools was randomly selected in this study. A set of questionnaires was designed as an instrument to collect empirical data for this study. The key result shows that the respondents were interested in skilled training but their confidence was at moderate level. The findings also show that there was no significant difference with regard to the students' interest in vocational education based on gender. However, there is a significant difference between males and females with regard to their confidence in embarking in vocational education. These empirical findings are critical in deciding the future training and career pathway for hearing-impaired students in Malaysia.

Keywords: Special vocational school, skilled training, hearing-impaired students, confidence level, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

In conjunction with the fast development in the areas of education, especially in the field of technical and vocational education, the special needs students in Malaysia are being given fair opportunity to receive a formal education in order to produce a quality human resource (Jusma, 2004). The aim of special education in Malaysia is to provide equal opportunity for all students; to produce inclusive community and for special needs students to achieve optimum individual development (Ruzanna & Suhaida, 2013). To ensure employability of the special needs population especially in the public sector, the Malaysian government has endorsed General Order (circular 3/2008) that every public agency and the appointing authorities have to hire special needs adults at least 1% of the total employees in the respective public institutions or companies. However, despite the 1% quota's allocation for the disabled people to be hired in public institutes, special needs people have not being accepted well in the open job-market and it is difficult for them to get any job (Zinaida, 2006).

When we discuss about the special needs learners in the technical and vocational education, many people are skeptical about the employability of these individuals. In a special needs vocational education school, the hearing-impaired students are exposed to vocational programs. However, the graduates of the vocational program often feel ambivalent about what job and career pathway that can they do in the future. In terms of vocational qualification, the hearing-impaired students could obtain the official Malaysian Skills Certificate if they go through two-year skills training and pass the training.

The certificate is recognized by the Department of Skills Development (DSD) and industry in Malaysia. Nevertheless these questions arise: Did the students with hearing problem who participate in the vocational training interested in the vocational education itself? And do they have the

confidence to use vocational training in their future careers?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

There are four objectives of this research:

- a) To identify the level of interest of students with hearing problem toward vocational education.
- b) To identify the level of confidence of students with hearing problem in applying their vocational skills in their future careers.
- c) To determine any significant differences regarding students' interest in vocational education based on gender.
- d) To determine any significant differences regarding students' confidence level in vocational education based on gender.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used survey design. The set of questionnaires used in the research was adapted based on the instrument developed by Dayana (2009). The Alpha Cronbach for the instrument was 0.77. The sample for this research was 127 hearing-impaired students in the special vocational schools in Malaysia that offered Malaysian Skills Certificate (MSC). A stratified random sampling technique was used in this research to select hearing-impaired students who were taking the Malaysian Skills Certificate in special vocational schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interest in Vocational Education

The main finding shows that the interest of the students with hearing problem toward vocational education is at moderate level. This result is supporting the finding of Norshahril (2012) that stated the people with hearing problem are not highly interested in vocational training. Some of the hearing-impaired students said it was difficult for them to learn vocational subjects and thus it decreases their interest in vocational training (Esah, 2003). Interest plays a major role in the process of teaching and learning. Any individual that are interested in what they learnt will show a satisfying and high level of performance in the field that they are interested in (Abd Rahim Hamdan *et al.*, 2006). The skills training programs offered by the government and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) are aimed to prepare the special needs individuals not only the basic skills but also the vocational skills so that they can be employed (Chua & Koh, 1992). Yahya and Norliza (2010) stated that interest is the main factor to ensure the degree of success of people who took technical and vocational education.

Norshahril (2012) found that hearing-impaired people have less or no capability in making decisions about careers because they have limited skills, physically disabled, have different interests, or do not have interest at all. The current phenomenon is that the vocational students with hearing-impaired rarely being employed in the field that they were trained in. Thus, even after getting skilled training, most of the graduates with hearing-impaired still dependent on others for their living.

Confidence toward Skills Training

The empirical finding of the research shows that the confidence level of the students' with hearing problem toward vocational education is at moderate level. As any human being, the hearing-impaired individuals have a high hope in getting a job. However, there are some barriers that inhibit them to getting a job. Hall (2010) stated the low confidence level is detected to be the reason why the hearing-impaired graduates are not being able to secure a position in an organization. Norshahril (2012) also stated that the lack of confidence of the people with hearing problem is one of the reasons of high unemployment among hearing-impaired individuals.

Moreover, the research found that students' with hearing problem lack of critical skills that are required by the industry. Ramlee and Greenan (2002) stated that employers of the manufacturing industries in Malaysia view that the graduates from vocational schools possess sufficient vocational skills but they are lacking of certain employability skills such as interpersonal, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills. Mohamad Sattar *et al.* (2009) stated that the disabled people are depending on their paper qualification to obtain a job rather than to be competent in skills needed by the employers. Ouston (1993) and Restine (1997) stated that an effective strategy is to combine what has been taught and what has been practice by the skilled workers. Therefore, this group of people has to be given the proper training to enhance their confidence level before entering the job market.

Is there any significant difference in the respondents' interest toward vocational education based on gender?

The result of the t-test shows the significant level (p) of 0.72 which is higher than the value of 0.05, hence the hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, the finding shows that there is no significant difference between students' interest in vocational education based on gender. Similarly, Rohana (2010) found that there is no significant relationship between choice of careers and gender. Noor Rahamah (2006) stated that both men and women should be given equal educational opportunity but she has found that there are some segregations of jobs based on gender. Aminah Ahmad (2000) stated that women's participation in education field is really encouraging but there is still a gap between men and women in vocational and technical education.

In this research, even though in general, there is no significant difference between males and females in terms of their interest in vocational education but at micro level, some male respondents are more interested in courses of craftsmanship while some female respondents are more interested in creative and fine arts. Students with hearing problem should have a deep interest in technical careers before they can participate in vocational training.

Is there any significant difference in the respondents' confidence level toward vocational education based on gender?

In terms of the confidence level, the t-test shows a significant difference between male and female students regarding their confidence toward vocational education. Based on the t-test, the significant level found to be $p=0.02$ which is lower than value which is 0.05. According to the study by Yahya and Faizah (2010), they found that trainees from Mara Skills Institute (MSI) in Johor Bahru feel that the skills gained through the learning can be really useful when they start to work. The trainees have the confidence to apply their skills in their future workplace. According to Zakiah Osman (2012), female students display a higher confidence level than male students.

CONCLUSION

The vocational and skills training programs for the students with hearing-impaired are very crucial to ensure the employability of the graduates. Although the government has mandated (Services Circular 3/2008) that every public agency and the appointing authorities have to hire special needs individuals at least one percent of the total staff in a public institution, only a small number of disabled people being employed in public institutes. Thus, special needs people experienced difficulty in finding any job. This research has found that the key result shows that the students with hearing-impaired were interested in the skilled training but their confidence level was moderate. The findings also show that there was no significant difference with regard to the students' interest in vocational education based on gender. However, there is a significant difference between males and females with regard to their confidence in embarking in vocational education. Hence, students with hearing problem should grab any opportunity that comes and use the skills training wisely because the skills gained can help them to be independent and contribute to the stability and economy of the country. Skills training would make the hearing-impaired persons more employable and thus reducing their over dependent on others.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Rahim Hamdan, Ahmad Johari Sihes, Jamaluddin Ramli & Musa Ismail (2006). *Tahap minat, pengetahuan dan kemahiran, latihan guru dan beban tugas guru program pemulihan khas Sekolah Kebangsaan Daerah Pontian, Johor*. Skudai: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Aminah Ahmad (2000). The participation of Malaysian women in education: The post-independence era. *The Proceedings of the 16th Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia*. Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. 27-31 July.
- Chua T.T. & Koh B.B. (1992). *Pendidikan khas dan pemulihan*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Dayana Farzeeha Ali (2009). *Persepsi pelatih-pelatih lelaki Sekolah Henry Gurney, Telok Mas Melaka terhadap program latihan kemahiran vokasional yang dijalankan*. Tesis Sarjana Muda. Skudai: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Esah Sulaiman (2003). *Amalan profesionalisme perguruan*. Tesis Sarjana Muda. Skudai: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Hall, J.P. & Parker, K. (2010). Stuck in a loop: Individual and system barriers for job seekers with disabilities. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 58(3), 246-256.
- Jusma Jaafar (2004). *Tinjauan gaya pembelajaran pelajar-pelajar pekak di Sekolah Pendidikan Khas Besut, Terengganu: Satu kajian kes*. Tesis Sarjana. Batu Pahat: Kolej Universiti Teknologi Tun Hussein Onn.
- Mohamad Sattar Rasul, Md Yusof, Napsiah, Muhammad Rashid & Rose Amnah (2008). Pembangunan standard pengukuran kemahiran 'Employability'. *Jurnal Teknologi*, 49(E), 15-30.
- Noor Rahamah Abu Bakar (2006). Pendidikan dan pekerjaan di kalangan wanita di Malaysia serta keperluan bimbingan vokasional dalam pemilihan pekerjaan. *Jurnal e-Bangi*, 1(1), 1-12.
- Norshahril Abdul Hamid (2012). *Halangan OKU pendengaran di Malaysia mendapat pekerjaan*. Tesis Sarjana. Skudai: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Ouston, J. (1993). Management competences, school effectiveness and education management. *Educational Management and Administration*, 21(4), 212-221.
- Ramlee Mustapha & Greenan, J. (2002). The role of vocational education in economic development in Malaysia: Educators' and employers' perspectives. *Journal of Industrial Teacher Education*, 39(2), 58-78.
- Restine, L.N. (1997). Experience, meaning and principal development. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 35(3), 253-266.
- Rohana Abdul Rahim (2010). *Minat kerjaya, efikasi sendiri, keputusan kerjaya, kemahiran employabiliti dan pilihan kerjaya pelajar vokasional pertanian di Semenanjung Malaysia*. Tesis Doktor Falsafah. Serdang: Universiti Putra Malaysia.

- Ruzanna Mohd Nasir & Suhaida Abd Kadir (2013). Beban tugas guru teknikal di Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Khas Vokasional (SMPKV). *Seminar Pasca Siswazah dalam Pendidikan (GREDEC 2013)*.
- Yahya Buntat & Faizah Sharip (2010). *Aspirasi pekerjaan para pelatih Institut Kemahiran Mara (IKM) Johor Bahru terhadap latihan yang diikuti*. Skudai: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Yahya Buntat & Norliza Ensa (2010). *Minat pelajar wanita dalam mata pelajaran teknik dan vokasional di sekolah*. Skudai: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Zinaida Ariffin (2006). *Kerjaya untuk orang kurang upaya*. Bentong: PTS Professional Sdn. Bhd.
- Zakiah Osman (2012). *Persepsi pensyarah Jabatan Teknologi Maklumat dan Komunikasi (JTMK) Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah (POLIMAS) terhadap kemahiran interpersonal dan intrapersonal pelajar JTMK POLIMAS*. Jitra: Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah.