

Graduate and employer perspectives on course efficacy – A study of VET in a developing economy

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Rationale – Challenges facing TVET

Globalisation

Knowledge-based economy

(Hughes, 2005; Maclean, 2007)

Increased emphasis on generic skills esp. lifelong learning

(Hill, 2007; Dearing Report, 1996; DFES, 2003; DEST, 2002; ANTA2003; Goh, 1997; Malaysia, 2001)

Gaps in outcome evaluation research

Alumni and Employer Feedback

(Hoey and Gardner, 1999; Green, 2004)

Longer Tracer Study

(Palermo, 2003; Guthrie, 2003; Brennan, Lyons, Schornburg & Teichler, 1994)

- An evaluative case study of two courses
- 2-year certificate and 3-year diploma in Food Technology
- Conducted by the Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Polytechnic in Malaysia
- Polytechnics in Malaysia is like TAFEs in Australia



Rationale

Previous related studies in Malaysia

Only 3 in polytechnic contexts

(Tracer Study Team, 1989; BPP, 2006; 2007)

- < 12 months after graduation

- Food Technology & Wood Technology → Science Studies

- Lack input from employers

Gaps in evaluation research (Malaysian polytechnics)

- Sector Skills Identification (Food Sector)
- Generic Skills Identification

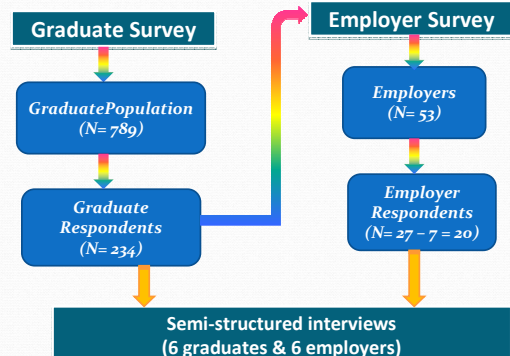
Research Questions

Some research questions that guided this study are:

1. How effective were the two-year *Certificate* and the three-year *Diploma in Food Technology* courses in preparing graduates for employment and/or further education from the perspectives of course graduates and employers?
2. How effective were the two-year *Certificate* and the three-year *Diploma in Food Technology* courses in helping graduates acquire generic skills necessary for employment and/or further education particularly life-long learning skills, from the perspectives of course graduates and employers?

Methodology – Data Collection

- Mixed method research design



Preliminary Results – Some demographic data

Table 1 Ethnicity versus Gender of the Graduate Participants

Ethnicity	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Malays & other indigenous groups	33 14.2 %	186 80.2 %	219 94.4 %
Chinese	2 0.9 %	9 3.8 %	11 4.7 %
Indian	0 0.0 %	2 0.9 %	2 0.9 %
Total	35 15.1 %	197 84.9 %	232 100.0 %

Table 2 Current Employment/ Further Education Status of Graduate Respondents*Qualification

Qualification	Current employment / further education status of respondents			
	Employed	Studying	Unemployed	Total
Diploma Level	68	45	5	118
% within Qualification	57.6%	38.1%	4.2%	100.0%
% of Total	29.2%	19.3%	2.1%	50.6%
Certificate Level	34	70	11	115
% within Qualification	29.6%	60.9%	9.6%	100.0%
% of Total	14.6%	30.0%	4.7%	49.4%
Total (excluding Missing)	102	115	16	233
Either employed or studying	43.8%	49.3%	6.9%	100.0%
	93.1%			

Figure 1 Relatedness of Current Job to Food Technology Training

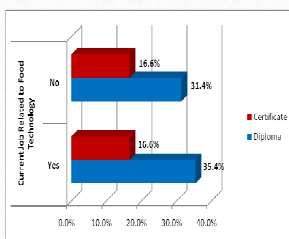


Figure 2 Graduates' Field of Study during Further Education

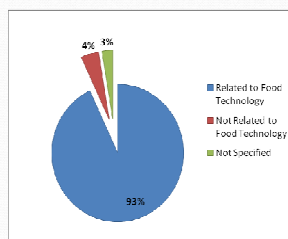


Figure 3 Graduate Responses to Items on Course Efficacy in Preparing them for Employment and/or Further Education

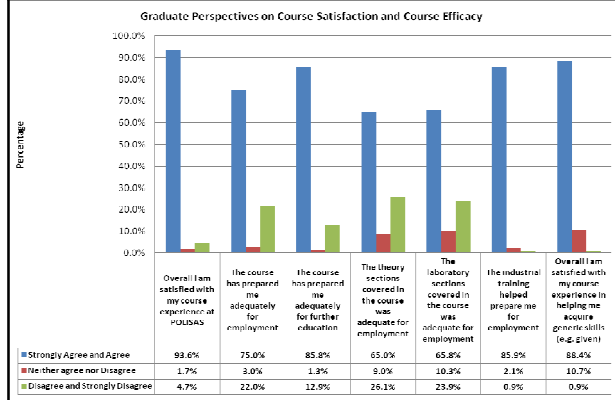
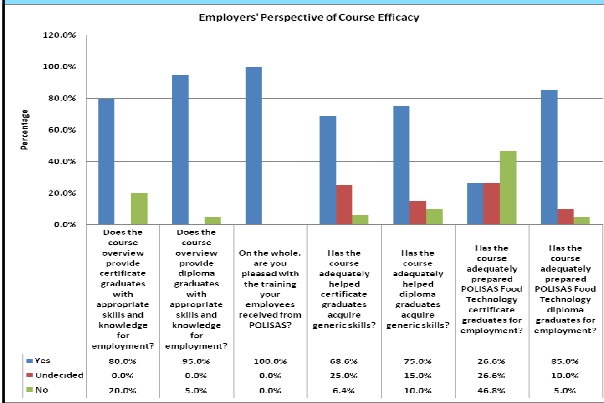


Figure 4 Employer Responses to Items on Course Efficacy of Certificate and Diploma Holders



Importance of Attributes at the Workplace

	d. How important is oral communication skills?	e. How important is written communication skills?	h. How important is effective use of ICT Technology?	p. How important is creative and critical thinking skills?
Mann-Whitney U	1344.000	1507.500	1607.000	1710.500
Wilcoxon W	1554.000	1717.500	1817.000	1920.500
Z	-3.446	-2.899	-2.463	-2.161
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.004	.014	.031
Mean for graduates	4.42	4.25	4.20	4.39
Mean for employers	3.75	3.70	3.70	3.85

Summary of preliminary findings

- 93.1 % of the graduates were either currently employed or furthering their education. 60.9 % of the certificate respondents continue their studies in the same institution to obtain their diploma in food technology.
- Only slightly more than half the employed graduates are working in fields related to their training.
- Both graduates and employers have ranked the courses positively with regards to their efficacy in preparing graduates for employment, further education and the acquisition of generic skills.
- Employers find diploma graduates more ready for the workplace.



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