Employability of New Immigrants’ Youth Studying in Technical Program in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to understand the employability of new immigrants’ youth studying in technical program in Taiwan. A national survey was conducted to explore the employability of new immigrants’ youth from the perspectives of teachers and students. A total of 1,500 questionnaires were distributed to students and 1,171 questionnaires were retrieved. Valid questionnaires totaled 1,098 and accounted for 73.20%; a total of 750 questionnaires were distributed to teachers and 544 questionnaires were retrieved. Valid questionnaires totaled 524 and accounted for 69.87%. The study found that new immigrants’ youth performed best in emotion control ability, followed by personal management ability; new immigrants’ youth performed worst in basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, followed by native language proficiency.

Keywords: new immigrant’s youth, workplace employability, technical and vocational education

1. INTRODUCTION

Under the framework of the global system reform, enterprises expect skilled labor force for use to cope with the fast changes in working conditions and technologies (Asonitou, 2015). The government, enterprises and policy makers proceed to cultivate graduated students from higher education for the overall national prosperity, in order to link with employment rate and improve the standards of skills and competencies (Frank & Meyer, 2007). Harvey, Locke, and Morey (2002) stated that employability is the key agenda in higher education mainly because the expansion of higher education is one important factor in enhancing economic involvement in times of a knowledge-based economy.

Many researchers proposed that employability is not merely the ability to adapt to workplace but also the essential ability to be acquired. For example, communication ability (Maxwell, Scott,
Macfarlane, & Williamson, 2009), reading ability (Maxwell, Scott, Macfarlane, & Williamson, 2009), and information ability (Hamid, Islam, & Manaf, 2014; Koka & Raman, 2015). The basic ability of employment for job seekers is the essential element of job seeking and such essential ability serves as the foundation to establish personal adaptability, interpersonal skills and career management to improve the opportunities for corporate interview and acceptance. Employability is the issue that everyone faces in the career. As the government is actively developing the multiculturalism of new immigrants’ children, the study aims to explore the employability of new immigrants’ youth studying in technical program through the questionnaire, and the findings of the study may be provided for the competent authority in charge of education and schools to develop the employability of new immigrants’ youth.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employability has become the youth policy agenda and has drawn great attention from advanced countries since 1990. Employability not only means basic professional skills, but also means knowledge required to understand the potential value of an individual, the controlling position and employment in the labor market, and the important role an individual play (Tseng, 1972). It combines the attitude, knowledge, and skills, including all factors relating to individual performance in the labor market (Atkinson, 1984). Saterfiel and Mclarty (1995) indicated that employability refers to skills for individuals to secure and retain jobs, including work attitudes and habits and functional subject skills. De Grip, Van, & Sanders (2004) pointed out that employability is the ability of a willing and capable individual to attract employers and secure and retain a job in consideration of organizational constraints. Youth Development Administration (2006) indicated that employability can be obtained through learning, including (1) work attitudes and the ability to cooperate that are conducive to employment, (2) career planning and active learning, and (3) professional knowledge and the ability to apply.

Dacre & Sewell (2007) pointed out that employability should contain professional skills, knowledge and good personal attitudes, so that individuals can choose and ensure to find a good and satisfactory job. Employability requires personal expertise and knowledge to create an opportunity to secure and retain jobs (Petrongolo, 2009). Yusof, Mustapha, Mohamad, & Bunian (2012) believed that employability requires the accumulation of work experience to ensure that individuals can adapt to changes in the work environment and career development. In the discussion of employability, later scholars not only considered an individual's work ability or attitude and other related factors, but also included an individual's corporate contribution, personal learning, adaptation to the work environment, and career planning and development, showing that employability changes with the times. To sum up, the study defined employability as the knowledge, skills and attitude required for individuals in job seeking, which will assure finding the job and cover individuals career planning and development, the adaptability to work environment, and personal learning and growth.

Governments and scholars have paid attention to the employability of youths and proposed multiple core competencies for employment (SCANS, 1990; Commonwealth of Australia, 2006; Hillage &Pollard, 1998; Cotton, 2001; Brennan et al, 2001; Ministry of Higher Education, 2007; Department for Business Innovation & Skills, 2011). However, most of the researches focused mainly on students, and few researches explored the employability of new immigrants’ youth. Chao, Lin and Li(2018) integrated the findings of scholars (Azevedo, Apfelthaler, & Hurst, 2012; Mastura, Imam, & Osman, 2013; Sermsuk, Triwichitkhun & Wongwanich, 2014; Castillo, 2014; Paadi, 2014; Koka & Raman, 2015; Corker & Hooland, 2015; Dean, 2016) and proposed that employability includes analytical and thinking ability, problem-solving ability, teamwork ability, communication and expression ability, interpersonal relation ability, leadership ability, time management ability, information ability, management ability, professional competence, planning and organization ability, learning ability, personal adaptability, work attitude, work attitude, innovative thinking ability, critical thinking ability, self-marketing ability, foreign language communication ability,
personal management ability, basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, learning will and
development, learning will and development, and work independence. Through interviews and the
Delphi survey, Chao et al (2018) identified 31 indicators for the employability of new immigrants’
youth. The study based the survey on the above indicators.
It is imperative to understand the current employability of new immigrants’ youth in the future
workplace. Based on the multi-culture background and characteristics, new immigrants’ youth are
trained with personal basic skills, workplace skills and employability to successfully connect with
the workplaces in their native countries.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

(1) Research methodology and subject
To achieve the purpose of the study, the study conducted the survey targeting new immigrants’
youth studying in vocational senior high schools. According to the statistics, new immigrants’ youth
studying in vocational senior high schools totaled 19,322, and students for sampling totaled 1,013.
To avoid lack of valid questionnaires, the number of students for sampling was multiplied by 1.5.
The questionnaire was distributed to 66 senior high schools based on the percentage of new
immigrants’ youth. Questionnaires distributed to students totaled 1,500, and questionnaires
distributed to teachers totaled 750.
(2) Research tools
Chao, Lin and Li (2018) drafted the indicators for the employability of new immigrants’ youth
through literature review and established 31 questions based on the Delphi survey and opinions of
experts and scholars. The study based the national survey on the above indicators to explore the
current employability of new immigrants’ youth studying in technical program in Taiwan from the
perspectives of teachers and students

4. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

(1) Characteristics of survey samples
The questionnaire was distributed to senior high schools based on the percentage of new
immigrants’ youth. A total of 1,500 questionnaires were distributed to students and 1,171
questionnaires were retrieved, accounting for 78.07% of total questionnaires. Valid questionnaires
toted 1,098 and accounted for 73.20%. The characteristics of survey samples are shown in Table
1.

| Variable                  | Group          | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Type of School            | Public         | 508       | 46.27      |
|                           | Private        | 590       | 53.73      |
| School System             | Senior high    | 61        | 5.56       |
|                           | Vocational high| 1037      | 94.44      |
| Gender                    | Male           | 555       | 50.55      |
|                           | Female         | 543       | 49.45      |
| Grade                     | 2nd grade      | 642       | 58.47      |
|                           | 3rd grade      | 456       | 41.53      |
| Father's Original Nationality | Taiwan   | 1016      | 92.53      |
|                           | Vietnam        | 16        | 1.46       |
|                           | Indonesia      | 5         | 0.46       |
|                           | Thailand       | 6         | 0.55       |
|                           | Philippines    | 8         | 0.73       |
A total of 750 questionnaires were distributed to teachers and 544 questionnaires were retrieved, accounting for 72.53% of total questionnaires. Valid questionnaires totaled 524 and accounted for 69.87%. The characteristics of survey samples are shown in Table 2.

### Table 2: characteristics of survey samples – teachers

| Variable                                | Group                      | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender                                  | Male                       | 188       | 35.88      |
|                                         | Female                     | 336       | 64.12      |
| Age                                     | 30 years old or below      | 60        | 11.45      |
|                                         | 31-40 years old            | 211       | 40.27      |
|                                         | 41-50 years old            | 187       | 35.69      |
|                                         | 51 years old or above      | 66        | 12.60      |
| Years of Teaching                       | 10 years or less           | 217       | 41.41      |
|                                         | 11-20 years                | 204       | 38.93      |
|                                         | 20 years or more           | 103       | 19.66      |
| Years of Teaching for New Immigrants’   | 5 years or less            | 354       | 67.56      |
| Students                                | 6-10 years                 | 133       | 25.38      |
|                                         | 11 years or more           | 37        | 7.06       |
| Duty                                    | Teacher and administration | 100       | 19.08      |
|                                         | Mentor                     | 365       | 69.66      |
|                                         | Subject teacher and special education teacher | 59 | 11.26 |

(2) Current employability of new immigrants’ youth from the perspectives of teachers and students

The study compared the survey of current employability of new immigrants’ youth from the perspectives of teachers and students with the Delphi survey. The results of the comparison are shown in Table 3. Top 5 indicators for the employability of new immigrants’ youth from the perspectives of teachers and students were similar. Students believed that they performed well in ability of multicultural literacy, emotion control ability, personal management ability, work attitude, and work ethics and morals; teachers believed that new immigrants’ youth performed well in emotion control ability, personal management ability, work attitude, work ethics and morals, and social management ability.

Both teachers and new immigrants’ youth believed that they performed worst in basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and native language proficiency. Taiwan is a developing country with rapid information development, but new immigrants’ youth believed that they were insufficient in information ability, which was different from the teachers’ perspective. The perspectives of teachers and students also varied in professional knowledge in specific field and
professional work skills (techniques).
The study compared the national survey with the Delphi expert survey (2 from competent authority in charge of education, 6 from colleges and universities, 6 from senior high schools, and 2 from the industry) proposed by Chao, Lin and Li (2018). According to the Delphi expert survey, top 5 employability indicators were basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, professional knowledge in specific field, professional work skills (techniques), time management ability, and teamwork ability, which ranked 31, 20, 24, 14, and 7 from the students’ perspective. This shows that there is still room for improvement in the current employability of new immigrants’ youth.

Table 3: Employability of new immigrants’ youth from perspectives of teachers and students

| Indicators                                                        | Student | Rank | Teacher | Rank |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|------|---------|------|
| Q1 Basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills         | 2.43    | 31   | 2.85    | 31   |
| Q2 Native language proficiency of new immigrants’ youth          | 2.58    | 30   | 2.89    | 30   |
| Q3 Ability of multicultural literacy                            | 3.97    | 2    | 3.73    | 7    |
| Q4 Emotion control ability                                      | 3.99    | 1    | 3.89    | 1    |
| Q5 Living adaptability                                          | 3.81    | 6    | 3.50    | 20   |
| Q6 Foreign language proficiency (language other than native language and Chinese) | 2.77    | 29   | 3.08    | 29   |
| Q7 Personal management ability                                  | 3.93    | 3    | 3.84    | 5    |
| Q8 Professional knowledge in specific field                      | 3.44    | 20   | 3.62    | 14   |
| Q9 Professional work skills (techniques)                        | 3.40    | 24   | 3.63    | 13   |
| Q10 Problem-solving ability                                     | 3.51    | 18   | 3.61    | 15   |
| Q11 Information ability                                         | 3.22    | 27   | 3.59    | 18   |
| Q12 Communication and expression ability                        | 3.53    | 16   | 3.69    | 8    |
| Q13 Time management ability                                     | 3.56    | 14   | 3.57    | 19   |
| Q14 Ability to focus on details                                 | 3.63    | 12   | 3.60    | 17   |
| Q15 Work attitude                                               | 3.86    | 5    | 3.84    | 4    |
| Q16 Work adaptability                                           | 3.71    | 10   | 3.68    | 9    |
| Q17 Work ethics and morals                                      | 3.91    | 4    | 3.87    | 2    |
| Q18 Social management ability                                   | 3.75    | 7    | 3.86    | 3    |
| Q19 Teamwork ability                                            | 3.75    | 7    | 3.81    | 6    |
| Q20 Work independence                                           | 3.55    | 15   | 3.65    | 12   |
| Q21 Critical thinking ability                                   | 3.63    | 11   | 3.61    | 16   |
| Q22 Ability in interdisciplinary knowledge                       | 3.28    | 26   | 3.32    | 27   |
| Q23 Planning and organization ability                            | 3.41    | 22   | 3.38    | 24   |
| Q24 Ability of involving in projects and tasks                  | 3.60    | 13   | 3.66    | 11   |
| Q25 Leadership and decision-making ability                      | 3.40    | 23   | 3.35    | 25   |
| Q26 On-the-job learning will and potential development          | 3.75    | 7    | 3.67    | 10   |
| Q27 Comprehension on industry environment and development        | 3.47    | 19   | 3.32    | 26   |
| Q28 Job seeking ability                                         | 3.30    | 25   | 3.40    | 21   |
| Q29 Career planning ability                                     | 3.43    | 21   | 3.39    | 23   |
| Q30 Innovative thinking ability                                 | 3.51    | 17   | 3.40    | 22   |
| Q31 Entrepreneurship ability                                    | 3.21    | 28   | 3.15    | 28   |
5. CONCLUSIONS

(1) In terms of employability, new immigrants’ youth performed best in emotion control ability, followed by ability of multicultural literacy. Both teachers and new immigrants’ youth themselves believed that they performed best in emotion control ability. The performance of new immigrants’ youth was similar to that of classmates, but there was no obvious reaction in emotional expression, which could correlate with their background and identity. Mothers’ native nationalities were moderate, and family education affected the perspectives of new immigrants’ youth and their ways of dealing with things. As a result, new immigrants’ youth tended to repress their emotions; in addition, due to their identity, they were not confident in expressing their opinions, causing teachers and new immigrants’ youth themselves to believe that they had a good emotion control ability.

(2) In terms of employability, new immigrants’ youth performed worst in basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and native language proficiency. Both teachers and new immigrants’ youth themselves believed that they performed worst in basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, followed by native language proficiency. The degree to which the family attaches importance to the language of the foreign spouse’s native language will affect the language performance of new immigrants’ youth; that is, due to the low status of new immigrants in the family, it is difficult to implement native language learning; in addition, native language learning of new immigrants’ youth still focuses on life dialogues and lacks specialized words or proprietary or technical terms (Wu, Ma & Lan, 2015); in addition, vocational senior high schools do not provide courses on native languages of new immigrants or basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills currently, and few schools teach native languages of new immigrants through immigrant culture clubs. In the 2019 curriculum guidelines, the government has included native languages of new immigrants in language learning courses to improve the native language proficiency of new immigrants’ youth and their basic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

6. SUGGESTIONS

(1) The competent authority in charge of education should design the courses and teaching materials for native languages of new immigrants from Southeast Asia to develop the native language proficiency and cultural literacy of new immigrants’ youth and their parents. The Ministry of Education has planned to include the native languages of new immigrants from Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Cambodia, and Malaysia) in the General Curriculum Guidelines of 12-year Basic Education announced in 2014. They are required in elementary schools and optional in junior high schools (and identified as the second language in secondary education). The purpose is to develop the basic listening and speaking skills of new immigrants’ youth and further improve the cultural identity and parent-child interaction. Currently, the authority in charge of education has not provided courses on native languages of new immigrants and teaching materials in senior high schools. As most of the new immigrants’ youth have graduated from elementary schools and junior high schools, it is advised that the competent authority in charge of education should design the courses and teaching materials for native languages of new immigrants from Southeast Asia in secondary education to improve the native language proficiency and cultural literacy of new immigrants’ youth.

(2) The competent authority in charge of education should plan the certification system for native languages of new immigrants to strengthen the native language proficiency of new immigrants’ youth. Currently, the official certification system is available for Taiwanese, Hakka, and indigenous languages in Taiwan; however, there is no such system for native languages of new immigrants, which affects the motivation of new immigrants’ youth to learn native languages. It is advised that the competent authority in charge of education plan the certification system for native languages of new immigrants.
new immigrants to promote the benefits of native language learning, pass down the heritage of
native languages, and improve the willingness to work in native countries.

(3) The government may allocate sufficient budgets for improving the international horizon and
employability of new immigrants’ youth.

Despite the decreasing number of new immigrants’ youth, nearly 300,000 new immigrants’ youth
attend schools every year. Therefore, education for new immigrants’ youth is imperative. In the next
decade, new immigrants’ youth will become an important part of the workplace in Taiwan. It is
advised that the governments integrate resources and allocate budgets for the education for new
immigrants’ youth to improve the adaptation, international horizon, and employability of new
immigrants’ youth based on multiculturalism.

(4) Schools should provide career development courses for new immigrants’ youth.
The study found that new immigrants’ youth had low career planning ability and job seeking ability,
increasing the difficulty in seeking jobs after graduation. It is advised that schools plan career
development courses suitable for new immigrants’ youth and give positive encouragement and
appropriate career guidance to help them explore their aptitudes, interests, competencies, and value
and build confidence; in addition, it is advised that principals, counselors or persons in charge of
new immigrants’ youth visit the native countries of new immigrants’ youth to understand the status
of their culture, economy, and education, so that they can provide new immigrants’ youth more
appropriate information and improve their cultural identity.

(5) Schools should establish ways of communication to familiarize teachers with the family status
of new immigrants’ youth.

In terms of the current status of employability, there is a significant difference between the
perspectives of teachers and new immigrants’ youth. This shows that teachers do not understand the
learning status of new immigrants’ youth clearly. It is advised that teachers invite parents by phone
or in person to participate in their youth’s learning and understand the significance of school
activities and the learning status of their youth. By communicating with parents, teachers are able to
understand the family status of new immigrants’ youth and provide appropriate teaching and
guidance, so as to improve the learning status of new immigrants’ youth.

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