Career Management Skills Among Vocational Students

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Abstract - Career management skills are important elements that should be present in each individual, because career selection process is crucial for school leavers. The phenomenon of students who are less knowledgeable about career at the end of school is among the main reasons they choose a career that does not fit. The situation is very worrying and poses various negative implications such as work stress and frequent swapping of jobs. In fact, research has found that most vocational students have a low level of career management. Therefore, this study is aimed to identify career management skills that students possess. The research design was a survey using a quantitative approach with a number of samples, n = 480. Data was analysed using statistical software, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results show that students' overall career management skills are moderate. To develop human capital with the right competence, career management skills are critical requirements that can fill the gaps in industry.

1 Introduction
Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is an important pathway for vocational education and skills development. Other than that, TVET has become a major platform for lifelong learning. The transformation of vocational education that began in 2013 focuses on industry practices or technical competencies in providing an education system that meets all the demands of labour and industry. At the same time, increases employment opportunities for career development of students (Hamzah Bakar & Kazilan, 2006). With this education system, education institutions can develop skilled worker and quality human capital.

The economy and technology are changing rapidly and this requires the ability to adapt to transformation in workplace. As a platform to develop skilled worker towards career success, technical and vocational curriculum has applied the elements of career management to the students. Students need to have self-confident and always believe in themselves to be able to make career choices accurately and effectively. When a person has to make a decision on career destination, individuals have multiple choices to choose the best career that fits him or her. Information such as abilities, qualifications, aptitude
and personality will affect career decision (Damiri & Yahaya, 2004). In addition, students also have to be smart in managing a career with their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These elements are the key to have a career with job security in future.

Career selection process becomes critical for school leavers. The phenomenon of students who are less knowledgeable about career at the end of school is among the main reasons they choose a career that does not fit with their needs. The situation is very worrying and poses various negative implications such as work stress and frequent swapping of jobs. The age of adolescence is supposed to be an age in which students have to make the choice of career according to their talents, abilities and interests for the success of life in the future (Harvey, 2000) and indirectly, this may help them to choose a career suitable for the survival of the future. At a certain stage, a student is required to make a decision about the career field to enter into, but the process through which young people obtain and select information about a job is very poorly explored and known (Orpen, 1994). This situation has led many students to make career choices based on a certain basis without seeing the potential interests and talents, and this makes it difficult for them to make decisions about their careers in the future. If we look into it, among the challenges faced by students when making career choices is that they lack depth insight about themselves, cannot make decisions, lack of interest to plan or look ahead, and unable to solve a problem (Willner, Gati, & Guan, 2015). In this situation, they need to be trained and guided in making decisions and planning career development to suit their interests, needs, and abilities.

A mistake in career decision today will also indirectly invite various problems and conflicts within self such as bad work attitudes like truancy, late to work, failing to perform work or tasks assigned by the employer and the habit of changing job, and this is one of the main causes of the lack of interest in choosing a career and failure in managing career. They also failed to identify possible factors of short-term and long-term as a result of the mismanagement of their career. According to Harvey (2000), the type of work selected will affect self-concept, values, prosperity and individual life satisfaction. Overall, it can be stated here that, a person who is successful in life will reflect his success in managing the career chosen in line with talents, skills, abilities and interests, in their daily routine.

There is strong evidence to suggest that human capital and a positive attitude in careers such as career satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005) will greatly affect the success of a career, and education in managing career will help graduates to achieve their career objectives (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Vertsberger & Gati, 2015) starting from workability (Harvey, 2000; Tholen, 2014; Wilton, 2008), to reach a strong financial position. Young workers need career management skills in their career development. Most of today's teenagers are still not unemployed due to indecisiveness after school (Damiri & Yahaya, 2004). As career guidance, career management skills will guide them to plan their perfect future in line with the skills they have learned.

Career management, an important element in human resource management, that give a great impact on organization to retain the most talented and skilled employees (Feldman, 1988). Organizations often decide to adopt career management programs because they believe that those programs can increase employee individual performances (Fish & Wood, 1993), as well as foster positive attitudes and corporate loyalty among workers (Feldman, 1988). To make a clear career decision, people must have the right career management skills. According to Ginzberg (1971) the result of choosing a career will determine the pattern and the role practised by an individual in the society. Yahya, Othman, & Meruda (2004), states that career decision is an important determinant of status and position in the society, and this status has an impact on the value of life, attitude, style and personality (Lawson, 2004). There are various career theories developed that are used in career fields study. Some of the theories are the approaches leading to a very clear structure such as the theory of traits and factors, Holland theory and the theory of Anne Roe (Sumari, Md.Khalid, & A.Razak, 2015).

Other factors that influence an individual to balance between personal life and the reality of work
include opportunities for education, work experience, aspirations changes, changes in financial resources and requirements of the job market. All of these factors need to be managed in our career to achieve career goal and be successful. Knowledge, skills and attitudes are the elements of being competent. These elements will guide young people to make a better career choice. This is supported by Ginzberg (1971), who states that the level of education is important in making career choices. The level of education will determine the type of work that is suitable for a person. With a higher level of education, there is a better chance of getting a better job; and with primary education, the chances of getting a good job are higher (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012). Besides the level education, skills and attitudes also have influence in career decision making towards career success.

2 Problem Statement
Rapid technological developments have a major impact on the economy and development of human capital. Countries need to produce quality human capital to help economic growth. The employers are requiring employees who have both the skills of technical and non-technical in the world of work including skills in managing career. A study shows that learning institutions only emphasize on academic achievements compared to helping students to plan and prepare for the world of work. Evidence suggests that intervention by education institutions in helping students to plan and prepare has the highest impact in the development and career choices compared to other factors such as existing knowledge about careers and career development (Hughes & Karp, 2004). People who think that career management skills is an ability that is essential to proactively navigate the world of work, and that career building process itself is a reference to lifelong learning, is adapting to the skills offered by institutions of learning. However, there is evidence that students have not mastered the necessary career skills in the real world of work (Watts, 2013). Hence, it is important to determine the career management skills that students possess to help them in their career choices, and success is assured. The main objective of this study is to identify the level of career management skills among vocational students.

3 Methodology
The research design was a descriptive survey by using a quantitative approach. The population in this study was vocational students at four Vocational College (KV) Malaysia: KV Tanjung Puteri, Johor Bahru, KV Batu Pahat, Batu Pahat, KV Muar, Muar dan KV Segamat, Segamat with sample size, n=480. This research used a set of questionnaire to collect data. The research instrument has been adapted from Career Competency Indicator developed by Haase & Smythe (2007) to measure vocational student’s career management skills.

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data to get the mean, standard deviation frequencies, percentages and interquartile range. Frequencies and percentages were used to explain the distribution of respondents according to student’s engineering technology program. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse rank of career management skills among vocational students. Item indicators of elements for career management skills, distributed as shown in Table 1.

| Element of career management skills       | No Item          |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1  Career building                        | 1 – 17 (17 items) |
| 2  General knowledge                      | 18 -32 (15 items) |
| 3  Achievements in Employment             | 33 – 42 (10 items) |
| 4  Self-management                        | 43 – 52 (10 items) |
Findings
Table 2 shows the number of respondents and genders for demographic sampling. Table 3 shows the mean scores and standard deviation for the elements of career management skill elements.

### Table 2: Respondents’ demographic distribution

| Gender    | No. | Percentage |
|-----------|-----|------------|
| Male      | 249 | 54.4       |
| Female    | 231 | 45.6       |
| Total     | 480 | 100        |

### Table 3: Career management skill elements scores

| Variables                    | Min | SD  | Score mean | Rank |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|------------|------|
| Achievement in employment    | 3.41| 0.47| Medium     | 1    |
| Self-management              | 3.34| 0.51| Medium     | 2    |
| Knowledge of organisation    | 3.27| 0.59| Medium     | 4    |
| Generic skill                | 3.33| 0.46| Medium     | 3    |
| Career building              | 3.22| 0.64| Medium     | 5    |
| General knowledge            | 3.05| 0.69| Medium     | 7    |
| Self-appearance              | 3.12| 0.55| Medium     | 6    |

All elements of career management that record moderate mean scores are as follows: achievement in employment, self-management, knowledge of organisation, generic skill and self-appearance; also career building and general knowledge. Achievement in employment is at the first ranking and self-management is the second ranking in career management skill. The results of research found that vocational college students do not really know how to manage their career in the right way. But if they have a good skill to manage their career, they have the potential to assume high job positions in organisations; they also can develop the social skills to mix around, and they are responsible people who can keep secrets or official information (Raybould & Sheedy, 2005).

**5 Discussion and Conclusion**

Based on the findings, students must have some skills to manage their career before they finish school. This is very important because good management are essential skill to be successful in career. This finding is supported by Bridgstock (2010), which states that students' career management is a key element in the development and establishment of a country's economy. Institution of vocational education also
clearly plays a significant role in developing and shaping this process through strategic work, as well as improving teaching and learning, so that vocational students can get a secure job. Career management skills are related to student intentions to pursue graduate education (Seibert et al., 2013). Students should take responsibility of their own career to be more successful. They should have career management skills to improve their career. To develop human capital with the right competence, career management skills are critical requirements that can fill the gaps in industry. In early education, career management skills have to be developed as career guidance for school leavers to find a job. Other stakeholders such as the industries, parents and lecturers in vocational college have to collaborate to develop students’ self-management and employability skills. This is because the skills learnt through daily activities concerning the environment, behaviours, and students’ mentality encourages them when they are still studying. Teachers and counsellors have to cooperate with the industry in giving guidance and inspiration to the students, which will help them to acquire more career management skills in order to be excellent workers. Students need guidance in the course of their study and training, and it is a big responsibility for the college to provide them with relevant education, which will fulfil the gaps in industry.

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