

**FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CAREER CHOICE OF FINAL YEAR
EDUCATION STUDENTS IN UNIMAS**

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This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Bachelor of Science with Honours
(Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

2008

The project entitled “Factors Associated with Career Choice of Final Year Education Students in UNIMAS” was prepared by Wong Siew Ling and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science with Honours (Human Resource Development)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I would like to express very thanks and deepest appreciation to my respected supervisor, Professor Dr. Peter Songan as a Professor in the field of Human Resource Development, in providing me very useful guidance and support. My appreciation also goes to Dr. Sopian Bujang and Mr. Ahmad Sofian Shminan as coordinators for this Final Year Project 1 & 2 in providing me information to finish this project smoothly.

Millions of thanks also go to all the staffs in the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development for their cooperation towards the completion of my Final Year Project. Heartfelt gratitude is owed to the Final Year Education students for their contribution in responding to the questionnaires.

Last but not least, I would like to dedicate this project to my beloved parents, Mr. Wong Inn Look and Mdm. Yii Siew Ting, who have always given supports and encouragements to me that help me to finish this project according to schedule. I thank them for caring and educating me for all these years and am very grateful as they are the sources of my inspiration and my pillar of strength.

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CAREER CHOICE OF FINAL YEAR EDUCATION STUDENTS IN UNIMAS

Wong Siew Ling

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that are associated with career choice of final year education students in UNIMAS. The factors investigated are government policy, career opportunity and peer influence. Demographic factors, such as gender, family background and races were also included. A totally of 78 students were selected as the sample in this study. The instrument used in this study is self-designed questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument using Cronbach alpha is 0.866. For this study, descriptive (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics (Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis, t-Test and Two-Way ANOVA) are used in the data analysis. Finding of t-Test shows that there is no significant difference between male and female students in term of their career choice. Two-Way ANOVA indicates that there is no significant difference between education students of various races and family backgrounds in term of their career choice. Pearson Correlation analysis reveals that there is weak relationship that exists between government policy and career choice. Besides that, there is a weak relationship exists between career opportunity and career choice. However, there is no relationship exist between students' peer influence and career choice. It is concluded that government policy and career opportunity are positively related to respondents' career choice. Therefore, institutions of higher learning should constantly provide information on government policy and career opportunity to their students to be used for better decision-making about their future career choice.

ABSTRAK

FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI KERJAYA PILIHAN PELAJAR-PELAJAR PENDIDIKAN TAHUN AKHIR DI UNIMAS

Wong Siew Ling

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kerjaya pilihan pelajar-pelajar pendidikan tahun akhir di UNIMAS. Faktor yang dikaji adalah seperti polisi kerajaan, peluang pekerjaan dan pengaruh rakan sebaya. Faktor demografi merangkumi jantina, latar belakang keluarga dan kaum. Seramai 78 pelajar diambil sebagai sampel dalam kajian ini. Instrumen kajian yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah dalam bentuk soal selidik yang dibina oleh penyelidik sendiri. Alpha cronbach yang didapati daripada instrumen adalah 0.866. Analisis data dilakukan secara deskriptif (frekuensi dan peratus) dan inferensi (Ujian Pekali Korelasi Pearson-r, Ujian-T dan Ujian ANOVA). Dapatan kajian daripada Ujian-T menunjukkan tidak terdapat perbezaan kerjaya pilihan di antara pelajar lelaki dan perempuan. Ujian ANOVA pula menunjukkan tidak terdapat perbezaan kerjaya pilihan di antara pelajar berlainan kaum dan latar belakang keluarga. Berdasarkan hasil kajian Ujian Pekali Korelasi Pearson-r, terdapat hubungan yang lemah di antara polisi kerajaan dengan kerjaya pilihan. Selain itu, terdapat hubungan yang lemah di antara peluang pekerjaan dengan kerjaya pilihan. Manakala, tidak terdapat hubungan di antara pengaruh rakan sebaya dengan kerjaya pilihan. Ini dapat disimpulkan bahawa terdapat hubungan positif di antara polisi kerajaan dan peluang pekerjaan dengan kerjaya pilihan responden. Dengan itu, institusi Pengajian Tinggi perlu menyediakan informasi berkaitan dengan polisi kerajaan dan peluang pekerjaan yang berguna kepada pelajar secara berterusan supaya dapat membantu mereka dalam membuat keputusan yang paling sesuai dengan pilihan kerjaya masa depan mereka.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In this twenty-first century, individual are focused to business to gain profit and also earn their living. Therefore, human resources are more important and an asset to the organization. Organization needs employees and employees cannot live without it (Johns, 1992). In every organization, employee is a valuable asset to an organization and is the important factor to confirm the operation of the organization runs smoothly (Ahmad, 2007). Therefore, what is the key which connect an organization and employees? It is career. Career is an individual's course or progress through life or a distinct portion of life (O'Neil, 1980)

Career is very important for people in a society which can increase a person's Social Economy Status (SES), living and relationship with other peoples. Therefore, it is very important for people to choose their future careers properly. Choosing a career would influence a person's whole working life and living style, as the wise Chinese philosopher, Confucius, once said "Choose a job you'll love and you'll never have to work another day in your life."(Teo, 1994) A job people chose would be the career in their profession field and also career choice later. People chose a job not just to gain profit but to make sure they are satisfied in

their life. Therefore, career choice is very important aspect of life to determine a suitable job for the future.

Career choice can be defined as a process of dealing with the unique challenges of job searching and employment transition. Therefore, career planning is very important for a person to determine his or her career choice. Career planning is a process whereby an individual employee chooses and sets his or her career goals and identifies the means to achieve them. The focus is to match the individual's personal preference and goals with the opportunities that are realistically available. Career planning should be implemented by every individual because the consequences of career success or failure are linked closely with individual self-concept, identity, and satisfaction with career and life. Individual career planning can begins with self-awareness and self-understanding. People should recognize and evaluate their own skills, abilities and interests. Then, the job they chose would bring about job satisfaction later. The process of learning more about oneself is called self-assessment or self-evaluation in order to match individual abilities and goals with the appropriate job or profession. It is the process which must be ongoing to make sure individuals are making the right decision for themselves.

The career planning should begin for the undergraduates who will graduate soon or young adults who are involved in the career field for the first time. Those young adults are having difficulties committing to specific career goals, and taking longer to make even tentative commitments to initial career paths (Feldman, 2003; Germeijs & DeBoeck, 2003). Mostly, young adults discover their strengths, weaknesses, and the realistic demands of various careers (Moss & Frieze, 1993). When graduates enter the labour market for the first time, many of them do not obtain a job that matches their career expectations and goals.

Philip *et al.* (1994) studied 104 business graduates and indicated that the opportunity for advancement, job security, fringe benefits, pay and training programmes were the main considerations when choosing prospective employees.

Furthermore, decision making (Lee & Ho, 1989; Wilkinson, 1996), advancement opportunities, flexibility (Zedeck, 1977), good working conditions (Turban *et al.*, 1993) have been identified as important attributes for graduates in selecting initial jobs. Teo and Poon (1994) tested a list of attributes on 237 first-year students in Singapore. These attributes include pay, fringe benefits, working conditions, long-term career prospects, marketability, job security, managerial relationships, responsibility given, authority and involvement in decision making. They indicated that these factors were the major concerns of recent business graduates when they assessed the jobs that they were offered. The Graduate Employment Survey (2001) also mentioned that these attributes were important.

Therefore, making accurate and appropriate decision regarding career choice is very important for graduates. So, this indirectly helps individuals to achieve their career goals and living needs.

1.1 Background of the Study

Studies had found out that not every Education students will proceed to secure a job as a teacher after they graduated. In this context, the President of National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP), Ismail Nihat stated that the teachers nowadays have to face the changes occurred in the teaching field which make them feel more stressed (Abdul Muin Sapidin, 2005). Furthermore, a teacher has to play many roles such as a teacher to students, a professional individual, a staff, connector between students and their parents, a colleague and so forth (Reiman & Edelfelt, 2004).

Today, in new forms of schooling and new expectations for results, the teacher's role is far too unpredictable to be scripted. Teachers have to prepare students for indulging in the knowledge world. Miller *et al.* (1999) stated that teacher is a career profession who has to interact with a large number of students, parents, colleagues and top managements with different problems, complaints and claims. These matters need teachers to respond and react fast in order to solve the

unwanted problems such as students' poor results or bad attitudes. So, teachers must practise in very sophisticated ways. These have shown that, teachers in today' society is more stressed due to the increased indictment and complexity of responsibilities which have become their obligation (Gold & Roth, 1993).

Multiple studies have evaluated various career factors influencing in-service or pre-service teachers (Espinet, Simmons & Atwater 1992; Johnston, McKeown, McEwen 1999; Loadman et al 1999; Macdonald 1999; Su 1997). Those teachers seemed to have not enough job satisfaction after they entered the teaching field. Several studies in foreign countries have provided further insight of cultures, societies, politics, and economics that influence the perceptions of others towards the teachers: Jamaica (Bastick, 2000); Turkey (Saban, 2003); Taiwan (Wang, 2004); and Ghana, Lesotho, Malawai, Trinidad and Tobago (Coultas & Lewin, 2002). This had shown that teacher's job is not easy. There may be other factors that influence them for not choosing teacher as a career. So, more research should be done to understand what factors influence their career choices and how to make a good career choice.

Moreover, teachers are under the supervision of headmaster or principal. Scott and Twomey (1988) found that students perceived the small organization to be one in which there is freedom from supervision opportunity to be creative and original, and to take responsibility as a career. This indicates that no one likes to be observed every time and they want to have career development. By having career development, the opportunity for increment and advancement is higher. Besides that, they can achieve their individual and organization goal and experience the achievement in the working life too.

In Malaysia, teacher profession is the most difficult in term of advancement as compared to other careers. Farber (1991) stated that salary which is not equitable and less opportunity in advancement could result in stress and burnout among teachers. Undergraduate teachers in general consistently cite poor social status, disruptive and unmotivated students, and little opportunity for

advancement as major reasons of why a career in teaching is unattractive (Evans, 1984; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Commonly, stress is unavoidable to stimulate teacher's job and duties everyday. But, over stress will lead to negative effect which affects the performance and job satisfaction of teachers (Selye, 1976).

Other resources from overseas showed that teaching is among the least popular career choices (U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics, 1995). Furthermore, those students who are taking vocational education are not seeking endorsements in teaching career (AACTE, 1989). It is because most of the people like to choose things which they think are popular. It is the similar concept perceived by people in choosing the career.

There is also evidence showing that teacher candidates who are more academically inclined (scored higher in subject matter tests) have lower preferences of entering the teaching profession or might leave the profession after a short time engaging in the teaching field (Shugart & Hounshell, 1995). It is because they feel that they can choose other careers which are more challenging and suitable for them. Besides, they might think that entering the teaching career would waste a 'good human resource' as they think that teaching is an easy job which requires less skills and knowledge.

Education Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, stated that teachers in Selangor, Johor, Melaka and Kuala Lumpur had been categorized to 'teachers who got most burden area' since they had to take 74 hours per week to implement their duties, included 50.4 hours or 68 percentage related to curriculum (New Straits Time, 7 July, 2005). He also stated that those teachers were also burdened by duties such as filling 108 types of forms which were not related to their duties and had to take 38 days a year to attend the courses and trainings.

Education Ministry only allowed the principal, assistant principal and disciplinary teachers to cane students, causing the ordinary teachers to have less

power to punish the students. Teachers voice doubts that cases of indiscipline today are no longer the naughty pranks of yesteryears. Students nowadays go as far as killing, raping, maiming, assaulting and committing arson (New Straits Time, 22 July, 2007) In the news of New Straits Time on 22 July 2007, National Union of the Teaching Profession secretary-general, Lok Yim Phang is incensed that teachers are threatened with police reports and legal action over minor matters while before, students punished by teachers would be reprimanded further by parents when the incident was reported to them. He also stated that teachers have overworked and are stressed out as the class is big and students now can be really naughty.

In the cutting-edge technology, better educated parents and spoiled children have caused cases of teacher transgressions to bring out into the open. In the news of New Straits Time on 26 July, 2007 showed that teachers have rightly pointed out that it is extremely demotivating for them to see a colleague's career ruined as a result of public pressure when all he or she should perhaps be subjected to is anger management therapy. Most have continued to keep a level head on their shoulders. After all, it would be much easier and safer for their reputations and careers by just keeping quiet. This will tend to influence the graduates to look for other careers which are not so troublesome for them. These have caused the new generation to lose interest in choosing teaching as a career choice in the future.

Besides that, the attraction of other careers is very strong too. Philip *et al.* (1994) studied 104 business graduates and indicated that the opportunity for advancement, job security, fringe benefits, pay and training programmes were the main considerations when choosing prospective employers. Furthermore, decision making (Lee & Ho, 1989; Wilkinson, 1996), advancement opportunities, flexibility (Zedeck, 1977) good working conditions (Turban et al., 1993) have been identified as important attributes for graduates in selecting initial jobs.

The study is on factors influencing the career choice of Final Year Education Students in UNIMAS (University Malaysia Sarawak). UNIMAS was established on 1 October 1992. It is an education institution which plays a role as connector between students with the job world. UNIMAS had given the comprehensive preparation to the students with wide knowledge; skills and ability (KSA) professionally, depending on the courses taken. Students will expose to the real working environment, so that they can gain more knowledge about career and make good decisions in the career later.

Furthermore, students have known that progression of self and pursuit in education are important foundation for future career. So, effective career choice should be emphasized among the students in UNIMAS. However, due to the intense competition in our country, many graduates have faced unemployment problem. Therefore, students need to equip themselves with adequate KSA in order to be competitive in the job market. Different performance and progression among students in UNIMAS had differentiated their choosing of a career.

There are two programs of Education namely Mathematic Education and TESL (Teaching of English as Second Language). These Education programs are under the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development (FCSHD). The FCSHD was established on August, 1994. The Mathematic Education and TESL are first offered in 2004. There are 33 and 45 Final Year Students in the program of Mathematic Education program and TESL, respectively. However, Education programs were not offered anymore starting from 2006. It is because of the university policy to move all education programs to Tun Abdul Razak Teachers' Institute (IPTAR) and Batu Lintang Teachers' College (IPBL) in accordance with the Education Ministry's new policy which upgraded the teachers' college to university level. IPTAR and IPBL are the only colleges which offer and manage the education programs.

1.2 Problem of Statement

Due to the rapid changes in this globalization world, competitions in job markets come out with variety of jobs. Therefore, the undergraduates are now beginning to plan for their career. The issue that emerges here is that nowadays career opportunities are very scarce. In this case, the students, especially the Final Year of the Education program should realize that competitiveness in the teaching field is very high. They should pay more attention on the issue as it is related to their careers. This will increase their knowledge and information in finding the job in the future.

Thus, this study intends to determine the factors associated with career choice of final year education students. Specifically, this study wants to find answers to the following research questions:

- a) What is the preference of Final Year Education Students in terms of their career?

- b) What are the factors that influence their career choice?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine the career choice and factors that affect career choice of Final Year Education Students in UNIMAS. Specifically, the objectives of the study are as below:

1. To describe the demographic characteristics of respondents.
2. To determine the difference between students of various demographic characteristics (gender, family background and race) in terms of their career choice.
3. To determine the relationship between government policy and career choice.
4. To determine the relationship between career opportunity and career choice.
5. To determine the relationship between peer influence and career choice.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

The focus of this study is the career choice of Final Year Education Students, as the dependent variable. Three factors that are hypothesized to influence the career choice of Final Year Education Students are selected as the independent variables. These factors are government policy, career opportunity and peer influence. Selected demographic characteristics of Final Year Education Students are also investigated as independent variables. These are gender, family background and race.

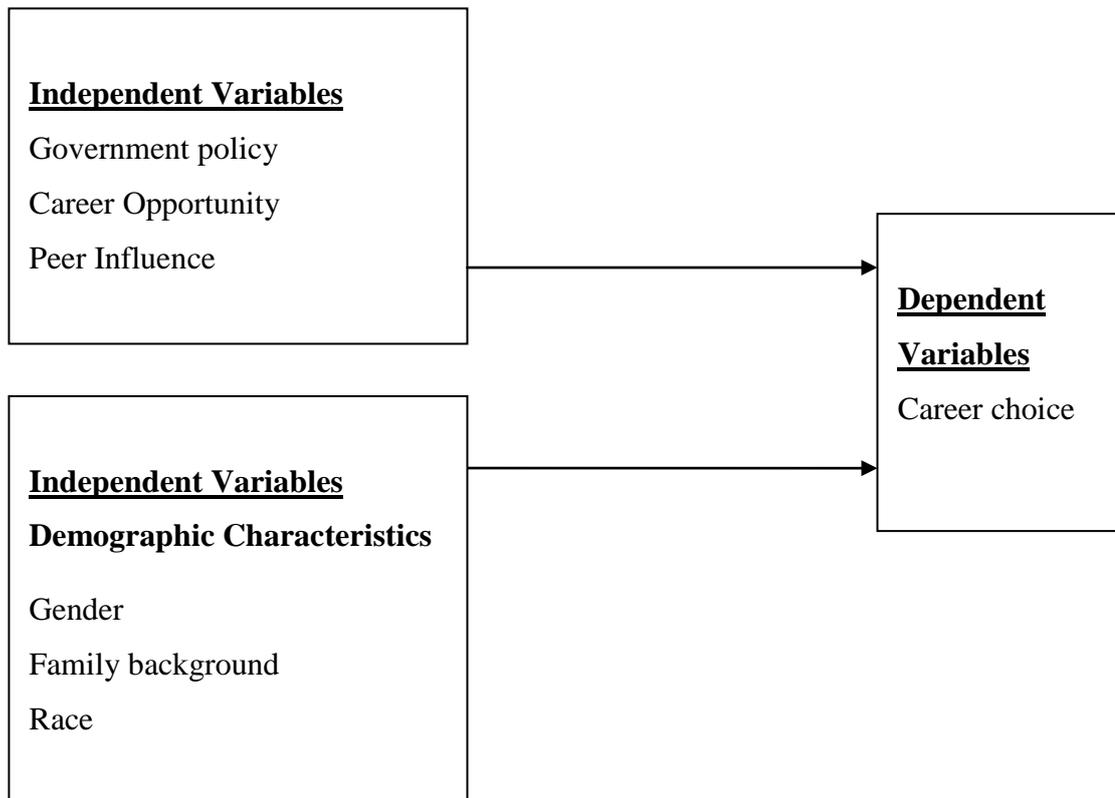


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework for the study

1.5 Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study and the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses are formulated.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between male and female Final Year Education Students in term of their career choice.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between education students of various family backgrounds in term of their career choice.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between education students of various races in term of their career choice.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between government policy and Final Year Education Students' career choice.

H₀₅: There is no significant relationship between career opportunity and Final Year Education Students' career choice.

H₀₆: There is no significant relationship between peer influence and Final Year Education Students' career choice.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate factors that are associated with career choice of Final Year Education Students. By understanding the career choice of students, the government is able to prepare the ground for future of graduates in finding the jobs in the future. Hence, it can help to reduce the rate of unemployment among the graduates. It can also provide an opportunity for the university to be more concerned about undergraduates' future career besides providing and giving lectures in class. By this, they will be able to implement some activities regarding career planning for the undergraduates.

The findings will contribute to the enhancement of career planning for the undergraduates. The factors identified will act as a guideline for the government to improve and refine what is lacking and less practised regarding the career field of the undergraduates.

1.7 Definitions of Terms

1.7.1 Career

A career can be defined as a person's progress within an occupation or series of occupations. However, a career is more than just a job or work or an occupation. It also includes individuals' progress through life, growth and development in vocational and vocational areas of life.

1.7.2 Career Choice

It refers to Final Year Education Students' interpretation and impression of career choice constructed based on their demographic characteristics and other related factors. Their choice is either to become a teacher after they graduate or otherwise.

1.7.3 Family Background

The family background here means economic status of the family. It also refers to as income of the family. In this study, there are three levels of status which are rich, moderate and poor. Income around RM4001 and above per month is considered as rich family, RM1001 to RM4000 per month is considered as moderate whereas RM1000 and below per month is considered as poor.

1.7.4 Race

Race is a group of people united or classified together on the basis of common history, nationality, or geographic distribution. Race in this study include Chinese, Malay, Indian, Iban and other races such as Bidayuh, Kadazan and Dusun.

1.7.5 Career Planning

It is the personal process of planning one's life work. It also referred to a process or procedure an individual should face before choosing a career in the future. Career planning is very important for students to set a career goal before entering the working field. They should match the career choice with their preferences first. Therefore, self-assessment is very important as it can lead to job satisfaction.

1.7.6 Government Policy

It is refers to Education Ministry's policies towards the teacher career and the undergraduates education. One of the policies established that is beneficial to the education students is giving scholarships for them to further their studies. However, students receiving scholarship from KPM (Education Ministry Malaysia) need to agree with the contract of servicing the government for at least four years.