CAREER SUCCESS: A STUDY OF MSc HRD GRADUATES IN UNIMAS

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Master of Science (Human Resource Development) 2009
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CAREER SUCCESS:
A STUDY OF MSc HRD GRADUATES IN UNIMAS

FIONA FAN

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to explore the perception of MSc HRD graduates toward career success, specifically the reasons for taking a MSc HRD degree, and differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on career success based on gender, age, and ethnic origin/race. A total of 181 sets of questionnaires were sent out to the respondents of the study after the pilot test, of which 25 sets were returned undelivered, making the total number of successful deliveries at 156. From the number of successful deliveries, only 48 sets (31%) of completed questionnaires were collected. The data collected from the study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14.0. Two types of statistics were applied in the analysis of the data namely descriptive statistics (i.e. frequency (n) and percentage (%)) and inferential statistics (i.e. t-test and one-way ANOVA). Based on the findings, the most important reason for taking the MSc HRD programme is knowledge development (66.7%), followed by personal challenge (16.7%), employability (14.6%) and lastly, career promotion (2.1%). This may be attributed to the respondents’ expectation that knowledge and skills obtained through education will lead to improvements in work outcomes such as increased pay, recognition, and opportunities (Naquin & Holton, 2003). Findings from the study also proved that there are no differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on career success, objective career success, subjective career success, pay, promotion, job satisfaction, skills development and work-life balance based on gender, age, and ethnic origin/race. However, there is a significant difference in the perception of male vs. female graduates on employability (F=4.319, p<0.05). The inconsistencies in the findings of the study compared to past similar studies may be due to the fact that the study was built on external sources instead of in the Malaysian context.
ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bermatlamat untuk mengkaji persepsi para graduan MSc HRD terhadap kejayaan kerjaya, terutamanya tujuan memperoleh sarjana MSc HRD dan perbezaan persepsi graduan MSc HRD terhadap kejayaan kerjaya berdasarkan jantina, umur dan bangsa. Sejumlah 181 set borang soalselidik telah dihantar kepada para responden setelah kajian perintis dijalankan. Namun demikian, sebanyak 25 set borang yang dihantar telah gagal sampai. Oleh itu, hanya 156 set borang soalselidik yang berjaya dihantar kepada para responden, di mana 48 set (31%) telah dilengkapkan. Maktum yang diperoleh daripada kajian adalah diaanalisa melalui perisian SPSS versi 14.0. Dua jenis statistik yang digunakan dalam analisa data termasuk statistik deskriptif (contohnya kekerapan (n) dan peratusan (%)) dan statistik inferensi yang melibatkan ujian-t dan ANOVA-sehala. Berdasarkan dapan kajian, sebab utama para responden ingin memperoleh kelayakan MSc HRD adalah untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan diri (66.7%), di samping untuk cabaran diri (16.7%), “employability” (14.6%), dan kenaikan pangkat (2.1%). Ini mungkin disebabkan oleh anggapan bahawa pengetahuan dan kemahiran yang diperoleh menerusi pendidikan akan membawa hasil seperti kenaikan gaji, pengiktirafan dan peluang pekerjaan (Naquin & Holton, 2003). Dapat dapan kajian turut menunjukkan bahawa tidak terdapat perbezaan dalam persepsi para graduan terhadap kejayaan kerjaya, kejayaan kerjaya objektif dan subjektif, penggajian, peluang kenaikan pangkat, kepuasan kerja, peningkatan kemahiran, dan keseimbangan hidup dan kerjaya. Namun demikian, perbezaan persepsi didapati wujud di antara graduan lelaki dan perempuan berdasarkan “employability” (F=4.319, p<0.05). Perbezaan dapan kajian berbanding kajian-kajian lepas mungkin disebabkan sumber-sumber rujukan yang digunakan adalah dari luar negara, dan bukan Malaysia.
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INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

As the first opening chapter, Chapter 1 will introduce us to several important areas of the study that forms the basis for conducting the research. These areas include: introduction to the study, background of the study, statement of problem, research objectives and hypotheses, conceptual framework, significance of the study, definition of important terms used in the study, and limitations of the study.

1.1 Introduction to the Study

1.1.1 Role of Higher Education in the Development of Quality Human Resource

As the most critical element in the achievement of the National Mission, the development of quality human resource is one of the key thrust for the 9th Malaysian Plan (2006-2010) (EPU, 2006).

To increase the supply of educated and skilled human resource in the nation, various initiatives were undertaken to reduce skills mismatch and enhance the employability of labour, especially graduates (EPU, 2006).

As a result, the number of labour force with tertiary level education has rose significantly from 13.9 in 2000 to 20.0 percent in 2005. In 2005 alone, the total enrolment in tertiary education institutions at all levels of study reached a staggering 731,698, compared to 574,421 in 2000, and is expected to further increase to 1,326,340 by 2010. Of the number, enrolments for postgraduate level i.e. Master and Doctor of
Philosophy (PhD) programmes, accounted to 16.2 per cent of total enrolment in 2005 for public institutions, and 3.8 percent of private institutions (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

Likewise, the number of institutes offering tertiary education (i.e. universities, university colleges, branch campuses, polytechnics, community colleges, etc.) has expanded rapidly between 2000 and 2005 in order to provide greater access to higher education for the nation (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>2000</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>University</td>
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<td>University College</td>
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<td>Community College</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Private:</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>University College</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Branch Campus</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
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<td>532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
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<td>690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Higher Education

Table 1.1: Tertiary Education Institutions in Malaysia (2000 & 2005)
1.1.2 Overview of the Master of Science in Human Resource Development (MSc HRD) Programme

In view of the importance of tertiary education towards the development of quality human capital in the nation, the Master of Science in Human Resource Development (MSc HRD) programme was first introduced by the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) in 1996. As of to date, the MSc HRD programme had successfully produced a total of 258 graduates.

The UNIMAS MSc HRD is a specially-tailored programme for working professionals, where teaching and learning activities are scheduled to be held in the evenings and weekends only to minimize work interruptions. The programme is unique in itself, as it incorporates cognition, human behaviour and information technology knowledge with human resource development and management, unlike other conventional HRD degree which focuses solely on human resource development and management.

The objectives of the UNIMAS MSc HRD programme are: to provide a learning opportunity at the postgraduate level for professionals in the area of human resource development; and to train and develop an efficient workforce with management capabilities, technological skills and the ability to understand the interaction between the mind and the environment (UNIMAS, 2009).
1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1 Demand for Postgraduate Qualification/Master Degree

The rapid economic growth, coupled with intense global competition and increasing corporate restructuring – such as downsizing, privatization, and merger – has led to the liberal expansion of institutions offering postgraduate qualifications and a surge in demand for Master degrees (Tay, 2001).

According to Mihail & Elefterie (2006), the main aim of a Master degree is to add value to graduate students by providing them with relevant business-related knowledge and managerial skills. For some, a Master degree is likened to an international “currency” or recognition (Carnall, 1995 in Tay, 2001).

A popular conception on the attainment of a Master degree is that it is the ‘ticket’ to career success, often measured in terms of increased salary and position within the organization (Baruch et al., 2004 in Simpson et al., 2004). Thus, postgraduate qualification is increasingly becoming a pre-requisite for both men and women aspiring for senior positions within an organization (Finney, 1996 in Simpson et al., 2004.).

1.2.2 Understanding the Concept of Career Success in Relation to Postgraduate Education

Traditionally, career success has centred on formal education, lifelong employment/job security, and hierarchical advancement. This view, however, is rapidly being replaced by the contemporary concept where career success is seen as (Baruch, 2004):

- Improving self-development competencies;
- Gaining employability (replacing the traditional “job-for-life” mentality);
• Making lateral transitions/spiral movements (as opposed to the traditional “up the ladder” route);

• Undertaking self-management/entrepreneurship; and

• Achieving work-life balance.

According to Nabi (1999) and Baruch (2004), career success can be measured in both the objective and subjective terms. Objective career success refers to extrinsic measures such as pay and promotions (Melamed, 1996 in Nabi, 1999; Baruch, 2004) while subjective career success is linked to the individual’s personal feelings of achievements and values (Baruch, 2004) such as job satisfaction, employability, skills development, and work-life balance.

Arkes (1999) in Buchanan et al. (2007) concluded that graduates of advanced degrees receive higher pay than those with only a bachelor’s degree. This is due to the employers’ assumption that employees with a higher level of education are more competent (Chiswick, 1973 in Buchanan et al., 2007).

Several other past researches such as Buchanan et al. (2007), Hay & Hodgkinson (2006), Mihail & Elefteric (2006), Baruch & Leeming (2001), and Nabi (1999) have also advocated a positive relationship between levels of education with career success.
1.3 Statement of Problem

In view of the importance of postgraduates towards the quality of human capital in the country, and the government’s effort in providing greater access to higher education for the nation, the question is thus raised on the perception of these graduates on their career success.

While there have been several previous researches to uncover the value of obtaining a postgraduate education in relation to career success, most of the studies had only focused on the career success of MBA graduates (Baruch & Leeming, 2001; Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006; Mihail & Elefterie, 2006), and none to date on the career success of MSc HRD graduates.

In addition, despite the fact that the MSc HRD programme has been offered by UNIMAS for a number of years since 1996, the author has yet to find any conclusive study which measure the effectiveness of the programme in particular towards the career success of its graduates.

Drawing on the research gaps identified above, this study therefore seeks to explore the perception of the UNIMAS MSc HRD graduates on their career success.
1.4.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are divided into the following main and specific objectives:

1.4.1 Main Objective

The main aim of the study is to explore the perception of MSc HRD graduates toward career success.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

i. To identify the main reason for MSc HRD graduates in taking a MSc HRD degree

ii. To determine the differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on career success based on selected demographic factors (gender, age and ethnic group/race).

iii. To determine the differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on objective career success based on selected demographic factors (gender, age and ethnic group/race).

iv. To determine the differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on subjective career success based on selected demographic factors (gender, age and ethnic group/race).

v. To determine the differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on pay based on selected demographic factors (gender, age and ethnic group/race).

vi. To determine the differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on promotion based on selected demographic factors (gender, age and ethnic group/race).

vii. To determine the differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on job satisfaction based on selected demographic factors (gender, age and ethnic group/race).
viii. To determine the differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on **employability** based on selected demographic factors (gender, age and ethnic group/race).

ix. To determine the differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on **skill development** based on selected demographic factors (gender, age and ethnic group/race).

x. To determine the differences in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on **work-life balance** based on selected demographic factors (gender, age and ethnic group/race).

1.5 **Research Hypotheses**

**Hₐ₁**: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on **career success** based on selected demographic factors.

**Hₐ₁₁**: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on career success based on gender.

**Hₐ₁₂**: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on career success based on age.

**Hₐ₁₃**: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on career success based on ethnic group/race.

**Hₐ₂**: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on **objective career success** based on selected demographic factors.

**Hₐ₂₁**: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on career success based on selected gender.

**Hₐ₂₂**: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on objective career success based on gender.
$H_{a2.2}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on objective career success based on age.

$H_{a2.3}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on objective career success based on ethnic group/race.

$H_{a3}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on subjective career success based on selected demographic factors.

$H_{a3.1}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on subjective career success based on gender.

$H_{a3.2}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on subjective career success based on age.

$H_{a3.3}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on subjective career success based on ethnic group/race.

$H_{a4}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on pay based on selected demographic factors.

$H_{a4.1}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on pay based on gender.

$H_{a4.2}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on pay based on age.

$H_{a4.3}$: There is a significant difference in the perception of MSc HRD graduates on pay based on ethnic group/race.