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THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM (ETP) TOWARDS YOUTH IN MALAYSIA: GENERIC SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationship between the employability with generic skills of youth. The study also aims to identify the level of knowledge, perception and understanding of the youth against the Economic Transformation Program (ETP). The number of respondents are 633. The findings showed that the relationship between the employability and generic skills is significant and only half of the respondents have knowledge about the Economic Transformation Program (ETP).

KEYWORDS

employability, economic transformation program (ETP), generic skills, youth.

INTRODUCTION

New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced to address the problem of economic imbalances between the various ethnic groups in Malaysia that affect national unity and national security (Zainal Abidin, 2007). National Transformation Program (NTP) is designed to improve the life quality of Malaysians through sustainable growth (Mahathir Mohamed, 2013). Malaysia's New Economic Model, which is targeted at middle-income levels can increase worker productivity and innovation and make the country's economy to a high-income country (Economic Policy Outlook 2011; Mahathir Mohamed, 2013; Pemandu, 2013). Development plans under the NEP was prepared and carried out through a double-edged sword strategy (Policies of Malaysia, 1970):

1. To reduce and ultimately eliminate poverty by increasing employment opportunities for all people regardless of race.
2. Restructuring of the community to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic function.

Government Transformation Program (GTP) is inspired by our Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Razak and the implementation is by the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU). It is a program that change government policy to become more efficient institutions and to put people first. GTP has come with the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) to institutionalize the socio-economic change in the 12 pillars set under the National Key Results Area (NKRA) (Pemandu, 2011). The challenges faced by this program is to get financial assistance from the private sector to help some of the ETP projects. Not limited to the private sector only, the commercial bank and Employees Provident Fund (EPF) too is reluctant to invest in high-risk corporate projects in the ETP (Asia Monitor, 2011). In fact, some economy analysts from Singapore have argued that projection need to be achieved through the ETP program is not realistic based on current market conditions (Miller, 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM (ETP)

Dato 'Sri Abdul Wahid Omar stated in the 2013 Annual Report of the Economic Transformation Program that the ETP represents a component of the National Transformation Program (NTP) which is designed to propel Malaysia towards a high-income country status. In his speech in conjunction with the launching of the Government Transformation Program Annual Report (GTP) and Economic Transformation Program (ETP) on 12th May 2014, YAB Dato' Sri Mohd. Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, mentioning that the ETP combines two components, namely the 12 National Key Economic Areas or NKEAs which focused on economic growth and secondly is the 6 Strategic Reform Initiatives (SRI), which includes policies and procedures are implemented to create a more competitive and dynamic business environment. Combination of NKEA and SRI is aimed to boost gross national per capita income to USD15,000, created 3.3 million new jobs and attract investments totaling USD444 billion by 2020 (Shmavonian & Hershman, 2012). The Prime Minister also expects that ETP can increase employment opportunities and improve the national gross income (Economic Policy, 2011). According to Deputy Prime Minister, key performance indicator (KPI) for NKEA is 110 per cent in 2014 (Muhyiddin Yassin, 2015).

Utusan Malaysia dated 29 April 2015 has reported that Malaysia's economic diversification under the ETP has managed to reduce the country's dependence on oil and gas revenues from 40.3 percent in the year of 2009 to 29.7 percent in the year of 2014. Malaysia also reported to have improved performance in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 6 percent, higher than expected by the World Bank which is 5.7 per cent. In addition, Gross National Income (GNI) has risen 44 per cent of USD7,059 (RM25,067) in the year of 2009 to USD10,426 (RM37,023) in 2014. Private investment continues to dominate the country's economy by 64 percent compared to 36 percent by government. Malaysia is the biggest winner in the ASEAN fund for the second year in a row with a gain of RM22.7 billion through initial public offerings (IPOs) and secondary offerings. In his speech, Prime Minister has stated that 1.5 million new jobs created so far in 2014 in the NKEA

since 2010, while more than 5 million people in rural areas have benefited basic facilities since GTP and ETP implemented, as well as 170,000 poor have increased total income in the last 5 years.

YOUTH

Most countries have their own definitions based on socio-cultural, political and economic developments in their respective countries. As each country has their arguments that must be respected just as the United Nations (UN) respects the definition of youth by its member countries even though the United Nations defines youth as the age group in between 15 to 24 years old.

The definition of youth by Ministry of Youth and Sports, Malaysia in the paper "Proposed National Youth Development Policy" (1995) stated that the youth is referring to individual aged between 15 to 40 years old. Among the highlights of this paper are:

1. It is the definition of the Malaysian Youth Council 1985.
2. It is considered as a group that has reached a satisfactory level of maturity and could receive the maximum benefit from the plans drawn up.
3. It is the majority of people in this country.

GENERIC SKILLS

Most employers today emphasize generic skills needed by graduates to enable them to play an effective role when they begin their journey in the world of work. Thus, graduates who meet these criteria have an advantage in getting a job (Saemah et, al., 2011). If an individual who performs related work have the education, knowledge and skills, he is considered a qualified person. If an individual demonstrates the ability to achieve the desired results, he is considered as competent (Inga & Deniss, 2014). This is a characteristic of generic skills required. They should also have good communication skills, especially in English, as it is the international language. English is widely used in news and information, business, diplomacy, profession, travel, and entertainment (Kenji Kitao, 2006).

Latisha & Suniya (2010) have reviewed previous studies that the majority of respondents (97.9%) of the study, said that all the personal qualities such as willingness to learn new things, dedicated and committed, self-confident, pleasant personality and approachable, have the drive to achieve results, intelligent and able to take initiative, responsible, reliable and can be trusted, able to adapt to change, able to work independently, able to withstand the pressure and uncertainty, can assess their own performance, piety and devotion, knowledge and skills, open-minded, helpful and ethnic and gender sensitivity is 'important' or 'very important'. This is one example of the skills needed in the workplace.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this article is to examine the impact of the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) to Malaysian youth. While the specific objectives of this article is to examine the relationship between employability and generic skills of youth.

The study was conducted using quantitative methods. Quantitative data was obtained from the questionnaires which were specially designed by the researchers. In this study the employability of youth is the dependent variable. While generic skills variables act as independent variables. A total of 683 respondents from aged 16 to 40 years old have answered the questionnaire which had 99 questions.

The survey consists of four parts, namely Part A, B, C and Part D. Part A contains 16 questions related to the background of the respondents such as gender, age, education level, work experience and so on. While there are 43 questions on Part B deals with the generic skills respondents, Part C with 14 questions related to career development and Part D with 23 questions related to their self-presentation. For Part B, C and D require respondents to answer using scores that are prepared in Likert scale where a score of 1 categorized as 'strongly disagree', while a score of 5 is classified as 'strongly agree'.

However, this article only covers the results of relationship between the employability of youth with their generic skills.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

For questions about respondents' knowledge on the Economic Transformation Program (ETP), a total of 50.87 percent of the respondents had never heard of (ETP), while 49.13 per cent had heard of ETP. The study also shows the relationship between the employability of youth with career development. Scale of employability is measured with three questions on five scaling Likert scale starting with '1' (Strongly disagree) to '5' (Strongly agree). The results showed that the respondents were not sure of their employability to get a first job with ease (B1: mean = 3.15, SD = 1.022), and they are not sure that they can get better job opportunities within the same organization (B2: Mean = 3.26, SD = 0.937). They also not sure if they can get better employment exchange in other organizations (B3: mean = 3.22, SD = 0.964).

TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF OF EMPLOYABILITY OF RESPONDENTS

Items	Response scale (%)					Mean	Standard deviation (SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis
	1	2	3	4	5				
B1 I believe I will get my first job with ease	7.0	15.5	43.3	24.6	9.6	3.15	1.022	-0.147	-0.228
B2 I believe I will get better job opportunities within the same organization	4.9	11.8	43.0	32.7	7.6	3.26	0.937	-0.347	0.104
B3 I believe I will get better employment exchange in other organizations	4.4	14.7	45.0	26.1	9.8	3.22	0.964	-0.093	-0.107

For the analysis of the generic skills, there are 43 questions related to this feature. The mean value was highest for the question 'I can communicate orally by writing in Malay language with good' (C40: mean = 4.20). The second value is the highest for the question 'I can communicate orally in Malay language with good' (C39: 4.19) and the third highest value is to the question 'I am a good listener' (C4: min = 4.10). While the lowest mean value is for the question 'I can solve the problem without the help of others' (C23: mean = 3.27), the mean value is the second lowest of the question 'I can communicate orally in English with good' (C41: min = 3.57) and the mean value of the three lowest (C20: mean = 3.58) for the question 'I am very creative in improving a job'.

EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS AND RELIABILITY

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) has been used to reduce the number of instruments in order to set a specific number that can be measured to determine how and to what extent the relationship between the variables based on fundamental factors. EFA has also helped to assess the legality of the items used in the questionnaire for this study.

All three items scale of employability subject to EFA. At first, Rotated factor matrix was calculated to determine how many components (factors) to be removed and explain the correlation between factors. The matrix for correlation of the coefficients were examined to assess the suitability of data for factor analysis. Table of correlation matrix shows that the correlation coefficient is above 0.400 with 0.700 KMO value has exceeded 0.600, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant. This confirms the items suitability for EFA.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Construct	KMO	Bartlett's Test			Total Variance
		Chi Square	Df	Significant	
Employability	0.700	721.594	3	0.000	74.206
Generic skills	0.962	14845.671	595	0.000	65.349

For generic skills, the variable has been divided into 6 parts. It consists of individual qualities, leadership and teamwork, thinking skills, competitiveness, basic skills as well as communication and technology. A total of 8 out of 43 questions were removed because belongs to more than one component which are C6-I can share with others, C9, I am committed to the tasks assigned, C27- I am able to use the knowledge in practical, C28- I am able to plan and manage time, C30- I be able to work as a team, I am confident to perform tasks C31-, C33- I am able to think critically and creatively, and C34- I am very sensitive to the current situation.

The relationship between the employability and generic skills is significant for p values shown in the regression analysis was p = 0.000 <0.05. The relationship between the employability and components of generic skills which are leadership and teamwork and basic skills are significant because it shows the value of p =

0.012, 0.003 <0.05. Whereas the employability and the remaining variables are not significant because the value of $p > 0.05$ which is the quality of the individual ($p = 0.889$), thinking skills ($p = 0.054$), competitiveness ($p = 0.062$) and communication and technology ($p = 0.427$).

CONCLUSION

In the vibrant development of the ETP and GTP, NKRA of all fields lead to job creation in line with the expectation of making Malaysia a developed nation by 2020. From this research, the knowledge of youth about the ETP is almost equal between the number of ever knowing about it and the number of non-never knowing of its existence. In addition, within three months, through this study, it was found that many youth are not active in job searching. Among the factors that could be considered is the introduction of the GST, the ringgit's decline, after the floods effect and other factors that lead youth to take more time to adapt in the environment that exists at the moment. This problem is amplified by a majority of respondents were not sure that they will get their first job easily.

Through this study, it was found that most respondents we asked have good communication skill for verbal and written form in Malay language. In addition, they also feel that they are the best listeners. One worrying factor is that they say that they need help from others to solve problems and also less power to innovate. This suggests that they are less believes in solving problems individually. Moreover, as usual, they feel that they have a poor command of oral communication in English.

In conclusion, at the moment, youth are still looking for jobs that suit them and ETP has offered 12 new areas that can add value to the youth in the country. Through this study, graduates' employability is depend on career development. Career development includes aspects such as, have clear direction, career planning for career development, the ability to use multiple sources to find job, willingness to develop self-potential and understand the needs of the industry.

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