My Career Path: Importance of Self-Assessment in Career Choice

1.0 Introduction

Over the past few decades, the fundamental skills an employee must possess that are demanded by employers have changed dramatically. Such as occupational skills, knowledge and personal attributes to be adopted in work culture. With these changes, knowing our own strengths and weakness become important which enables us to attain our career goals successfully. ***Employers are the most immediate consumers of our graduates. Therefore, as a student graduating soon with intention to be recruited immediately, it is vital for me to identify and understand the requirements of my target job in order to make me more likely to get employment and to be successful in my chosen career.

In this report, I will focus on discussing important factor that helps me understand myself when choosing a career. The report covered in it include ***employability of graduates in Malaysia, my characteristics and personality type, career plan and self-development.

1.1 Literature review of Employability and Employability skills.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has defined employability is an individual's ability to meet the changing needs of employers and consumers and thus to assist them in achieving their goals and job potential (CBI, 1999, p. 1). Institute of Employment Studies (YEAR) has similarly arrived at a definition that, while implying employability is the fundamental set of knowledge, skills and attitudes ***an individual posses that can make he or she can present to the employer. Furthermore, regarding to the report carried out by Hillage and Pollard (1998) of the Institute for Employment Studies for the DFES for developing a framework for policy analysis on employability, found that there are different point of view on employability. For individuals, employability depends upon the assets such as knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) ***regard to the job they choose. But it’s not enough for an individual only to possess the KSA to meet the requirement expected by the employer within the labour market. People also need to be capable using, deploying and marketing these assets (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). On the contrary, ***government policy more focused on the development and accreditation of knowledge and vocational skills compared with individuals which more focused on ‘softer’ skills and attitudes. In addition, Knight and Yorke (2003) define Employability as:

“A set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen careers.” (Knight and Yorke, 2003)

Increasingly, however, ***It is accepted that employability is based on various individual attributes (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; Knight & Yorke, 2002; Clarke, 2008; Harvey, 2005). As Mohamad Sattar (2010) stated that “Employability skills is important in helping people adapting with changes and improve career opportunities in the workplace.” (??????employability skills? Refer to (Mohamad Sattar, 2010). Ronald W. McQuaid and Colin Lindsay (2004), they define ‘employability skills’ in terms of five key areas: 1). essential

attribute – e.g. basic social skills, reliability; 2). personal competencies - diligence, motivation, confidence, etc; 3). qualifications and educational attainment that including work experience and occupational skills; 4). labour market attachment - current unemployment/employment duration, work history, etc. 5). transferable skills. But there are many ***aspects included in transferable skills such as basic, key and high-level transferable skills. For this reason, employability skills has become more complicated to be defined.

However, employability skills has been view as the abilities and qualities that make an individual more likely adapting change in the workplace in turn survive in a workplace (Australian Chamber of Commerce (YEAR); Rothwell and Arnold (2007) since the attributes that employers intend to see in graduates has become broader (Harvey et al, YEAR). Indeed, employers todays have placed more importance on graduates' transferable skills than the knowledge obtained from the Higher Education even though employers generally see a good degree as an essential entry requirement. Based on Azian and Mun (2011), a survey conducted by the Malaysian Employers Federation showed that 68% of employers most needed skill in a job application is communication skills. On the contrary, less than 50% of employers think having the right degree and good academic results are important for graduates when applying for a job. It would seem that good degree is not the top priority in Malaysia when hiring graduates. This may useful for graduates to recognise the skills needed and required by employers in advance before applying for jobs, sometimes called the skills-gap (Dr. Jacquelyn P. Robinson,2000). ***Hence, help them fit into the work environment and make employer view them as valuable human capital assets.

1.3 Graduate employment Marketplace in Malaysia.

According to the Study Malaysia (2017), MOHE presented statistics obtained from jobstreet.com stated that specialisation with the highest demands for fresh graduates in Malaysia are Administration & HR; Services; Sales & Marketing and more. Additionally, MOHE identified there are many jobs available for the students who graduate with these three courses of study in this ***presentation (Figure 4). For fresh graduates, an average of RM4,684 was reported to be employed graduates in skilled category received, while the semi-skilled category received RM2,139 (Graduates Statistics, 2018).

The employment rate is low in Malaysia compared to most countries in the region (Figure 1). In October 2019, the official rate of unemployment reported by the Department of Statistics was 3.20% dropped from the previously reported number of 3.30 % in Sep 2019 and regarding to the report carried out by the Department of Statistics for More Countries/Regions for Unemployment Rate, Malaysia is out of the top ten of countries or region with highest unemployment rate as showed in the table (Figure 2).

However, it was found that approximately 162,000 graduates did not get a job but this number was slightly lower than 2017. Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2012); The Malaysian Insider (2015) assumed this could be caused by the local universities poor in making students more employable a reality. In fact, the share of graduates in labour force was 83.6 percent, which comprises 4.15 million persons. Out of this, 3.99 million of graduates are being employed, an increase of 8.2% from 3.69 million in 2017 (Graduates Statistics, 2018). In short, Malaysia isn't doing too bad.

In order to raise graduates' employment rate, the chief statistician, Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin stated that "It is essential that all parties assess the supply aspects and employability of graduates in Malaysia.'' (The Star, 2019).

1.4 Career path

My target job upon graduating is work as a product/brand manager.

1.4.1 My Career Path is informed by Holland's career theory.

The underpinning theory that governs my career path is Holland's Theory of Vocational Personalities in Work Environment. One of the key assumptions of Holland's Theory assume that "student success is a function of the fit or congruence between students' personality type and their chosen academic environments such as academic majors." (John C. Smart, Kenneth A. Feldman, Corinna A. Ethington, 2006). Following graduation from Northumbria University, I will choose career path that related to my personality and the knowledge I have gained from University, which is become a product/brand manager.

Nowadays, there are many organizations tend to employ product/brand manager to maintain brand's reputation and increase brand awareness. In order to achieve this position, I will start my career with the job position of UNIQLO Manager Candidate (UMC) upon graduation to learn the basic management skills. There are many research define that key personal attributes of a brand manager are integrity, strong communication skill, strategic creativity and more (Cory Schmidt, 2019). Therefore, refer to the results from different self-assessment tests indicated that I am an easy-going person and have a preference for kinaesthetic learning which prefer perceptual learning experiences in real life, a career in brand manager seems to be the right career path to me. More details will be further discuss in Part 2.2.

As suggested by Michael Baicoianu (YEAR), having an master qualification will increase the chances of getting a Brand Management job and most companies now view this as their 'preferred skills' when hiring. Moreover, a study by Georgetown University (The Economic Value of College Majors, 2015) stated that graduates with a master qualification earned an average annual salary of $17,000 more than those with a bachelor's degree. ***With these suggestions, it seems that getting a master degree is essential and helpful in my career path.

1.5 Conclusion

The review of the available literature as discussed in the Part 1 has shown that employers nowadays prefer graduates with a range of skills and working in an environment that similar with our personality will enhance productivity and satisfaction because a career that enable us utilises our best skills can motivate us to work hard and explode new innovation (John Holland, YEAR) . Therefore, one of the essential things to do before making a career choice is by identify and improving employability, which including transferable skills, personal attributes and more. As Dacre Pool & Sewell (2007) indicated that "Employability is having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make a person more likely to choose and secure occupations in which they can be satisfied and successful."

On the other hand, Part 2 of this report will focus on whether my characteristics, abilities and

personalities can meet the job requirements of an brand manager identified by Uniqlo.

2.1.1 Introduction

Nowadays, self-assessment has become important in career choice as it assist an individual in selecting occupations that are best suited for them based on their personalities, skills, interests and values (Career Choice, 2019). Through self-assessment, ***people can recognise their strength which can become their employability skills, and the weakness that need to be improve to meet the job requirement in advance (Cleverism, 2019). In order to get my target job, below is a description of the various components of my own self assessment.

2.1.2 Work experience

Internship experience has become one of the important tools in self-assessment. Cook et al. (2004) states that students may find out how suitable they are to a target job or occupation from internship experience.

I have had some internship experience in my career path. By worked in different job position, the internship experience had helped me strengthen my skills and knowledge of industry. While working as a receptionist in a construction and property development organisation, I needed to handle office interactions with outside visitors which includes greeting and directing guests, answering phone inquiries, and handling requests or complaints. In addition, I have worked as an administrative clerk for a company that mainly provide professional advice about construction work to the customers and from that I have obtain skills in doing some of the financials and organise office filing systems. Through these job experience, not only I obtained analytical skills also learned to be patience when responding to customers' complaint. Whilst patience and handling requests or complaints in a professional manner are important abilities working in a fast retailing career.

2.1.3 Psychometric tests

Psychometric tests are often used as part of the recruitment process and employers nowadays always use the results from these tests to determine whether the intelligence, skills and personality of a ***job seeker are matches what they are looking for (WikiJob, 2020). Therefore, I decide to take several tests from Graduated First website to to determine my knowledge, skills and abilities against the requirements of my target job and determine how suitable I am for it

2.1.3.1 Verbal Reasoning

As mentioned above, my target job position upon graduation is obtain a manager position and verbal reasoning ability has always been view as one of the important skills that a employee must possess which showing a person's ability to solve a problem, critical and constructive thinking. Based on the verbal reasoning test result from the Graduated First website, the grade I scored in both tests are below the average percentile of a group of similar graduates who took this test. But the result are as expected due to English is not my native language. In order to employed successfully, Graduated First website ***suggest that reading broadsheet newspapers and scientific magazines would be helpful in improve my verbal reasoning ability.

2.1.3.2 Numerical Reasoning

Adina Mirion (2013) stated that “Without strong numerical reasoning skills, it would be difficult to succeed in many jobs today.” Reflecting from the test result, there are many areas I need extra development as numerical reasoning ability has listed in one of the most basic skill areas nowadays. As shown in Part 2.0, one of the job purpose is accelerating my understanding in responsibility of a store manager for profit and loss. The abilities such as understanding of complex financial instruments and the ability to follow standard procedure is needed to perform this task. So as to be competent for this task, spend time on reading financial report and remember basic math principle is needed to enhance my ability to perform estimate and analyse data.

2.1.3.3 Workstyle Personality Questionnaire

As mentioned in Part 2.0, integrity, ability to adapt in a fast-changing environment that requires a high degree of multi-tasking and passion for customer service are are important to work with that position. As employers nowadays are looking for an employee who will always be honest, reliable and treat other people in the workplace with respect. Such as coworkers, stakeholders and customers. (.)

If looked at the sectors of easy-going versus conscientious and self-focus versus people-focus from Work style Personality Questionnaire, the results indicated that I am an easy going person and even I am mindful of the work that needs to be done but not to the extent to which I could not understand other’s problem. Due to the personality of easy-going, I usually do not get stressed easily while doing multi-task and remain calm most of the times. Through these results, it make me feel that I am on the right track.

2.2 Career plan for next 10 years. (667)

Currently as Business and Marketing major, I wish to begin a career in business world upon graduation. To prepare myself for the career field, I have taken many courses that can guide me to utilises those skills and knowledge across different area of workforce. Such as the presentation skills, ability to identify consumer needs and wants, use of Internet and social media marketing that help develop promotion campaign and more.

As stated in Holland’s Theory (YEAR), the possibilities of a person’s satisfaction and success rate will increase when choose a career that similar to their personality type. Therefore, following graduate from Northumbria University, I will hold bachelor’s degree in business and marketing I will be prepare jump into the potential field that related to my personalities, interest, skills and knowledge I have gained from University, which is become a product/brand manager.

Upon graduation I would like to attain a entry level position in a medium to large sized company such as Uniqlo. Recently Uniqlo offer a position called “Uniqlo Manager Candidates” which provide the opportunities for fresh graduates exposed to the on-the-job education. It will give me a chance to enhancing my skills in management and inventory. Also, it will give me a chance to recognise the skills-gap which additional skills required by employers in advance. By valuable real-world and hands-on experience given by the internship, it will give me a chance to learn from my internship along the way. However, possess Bachelor’s Degree is not enough for me

to achieve Brand Manager this kind of upper level management and leadership positions. Therefore, I will go back to school to get my Master of Business Administration (MBA). Even though it is challenge to balance between work life and education but I think it will be helpful in my future. As well as being able to work under pressure and ability to deal with difficult situation.

If everything goes with the plan, I will complete my Business Administration (MBA) programme in 2022 as MBA programme at a Malaysia business school usually takes one year to complete. At the same time, I would like to have a break and looking for a job that I feel perfect for me. During this time, I will find a part time job that related travel as I am a person who like to travel and I think this is a good chance for me to identify the fundamental issues key to marketing successfully overseas by observing the consumer behaviour in different countries.

In order to achieve my goals to be a Brand Manager, I will work as an assistant brand manager for about two to three years in my early career. I am not exactly sure which company I would like to go into, but I have the most interest in fashion. So the biggest possibility is to work for a fashion or clothing company which can continuously improve my knowledge and skills in a specialised areas of marketing as well. During this time at work I should be able to predict consumer behaviour, develop strategies effectively for a brand and reviewing data. I will have to show my skills in the areas such as strong communication skills and analytical skills.

After getting a job as a assistant brand manager and learn everything about it, my next step is to achieve my goals which is become a brand manager. Brand manager always acted as key contact head in a company which connect and transmit the messages from various department. More than that, brand manager is responsible for maintaining the reputation and make new customers aware of a brand. Therefore, I will need at least ***another three year experience in branding, marketing, finance, leadership skill and highly knowledgeable of relating industry ***to ensure a strategic overview of the business and future market opportunities. Even though I will have a lot of obstacle in my career but I believe that hard work will guide me in my career.