



The Identification of On Job Training (OJT) Problems among Malaysian Vocational College Construction Technology Students

Nurhafizah Abdul Musid¹, Haryanti Mohd Affandi^{1*}, Mohd Firdaus Mustaffa Kamal², Faizal Amin Nur Yunus³

¹Faculty of Education, National University of Malaysia, Bangi, 43600 Selangor, Malaysia

²Faculty of Technical and Vocational, Sultan Idris Education University, 35900 Tanjung Malim, Perak, Malaysia

³Faculty of Technical Education and Vocational, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Parit Raja, Johor, Malaysia

*Corresponding author E-mail: haryantima@ukm.edu.my

Abstract

On Job Training (OJT) is one of the requirements to acquire Diploma Vokasional Malaysia for Vocational College (VC) students. However, there are a few problems among students during their OJT such as lack of leadership and technical skills. This paper examines problems among the Vocational College Construction Technology students' during their OJT. The research design for this study is a case study that is analyzed through qualitative method. The instrument used in this preliminary research is a semi-structured interview that involved Construction Technology lectures, students, and the construction practitioners. From the data analysis, four major problems have been identified which are the assessment in OJT, duration of OJT, OJT placement and job scope at the workplace, syllabus, and type of technologies used in VC. This study shows lacking in the execution of OJT for Diploma in Construction Technology and need to be improved. Therefore, further research is suggested to be conducted in studying the competency level of Malaysian Vocational College Construction Technology students after they undergo OJT.

Keywords: Assessment; competency; Construction Technology; On Job Training; vocational college.

1. Introduction

Construction industry plays a vital role in the development of any country [1]. The construction industry is the oldest industry that plays an essential role in the growth of Malaysia [2]. However, there are a few weaknesses and negative perceptions that have been identified in the construction sector which are low quality and construction productivity, negative image, delays due to bureaucracy, racist issue, insufficient data, and information as well as understaffed proficient. The most significant factor contributing to poor workmanship is lack of experience and competency of labors [3].

Competency has its relation with knowledge, skill, and attitude [4]. Lack of skill and lack of knowledge reflect the low quality of workmanship in construction [5]. For example, the usage of unskilled workers in handling the concrete works can result in blemishes on the surface due to lack of knowledge of the worker on how to handle and repair concrete [6]. Therefore, to ensure the enhancement of skills and knowledge is through education and training [7].

Construction Technology course is being introduced into the Malaysian educational system through Vocational College (VC). There are 45 VC that offer Construction Technology course. Students will receive Diploma Vokasional Malaysia after four years of study including undergoing On Job Training (OJT) [8]. The purpose of OJT is also to empower competency and to give

the opportunity to students to gain experience in the real world so they can improve their workability [8].

OJT is compulsory training at a real work in any government agencies or private sector for four months after they completed Semester 8 as stated in Vocational College Standard Curriculum [8]. The objectives of the OJT are [8]:

- (1) students are able to apply knowledge and skills learned at the workplace;
- (2) students are able to communicate effectively at all stages;
- (3) students are able to practice teamwork;
- (4) students are able to be professional and ethical in following the policies, procedures, and methods in the organization;
- (5) students are able to explain the tasks given during OJT according to the format given.

According to Machart [9], there are a few problems arose during industrial training which are lack of leadership and technical skills. Therefore, this study will investigate problems in OJT among Construction Technology students.

2. Methodology

The research design for this study is a case study that is analyzed through qualitative method. The instrument that involved is a semi-structured interview which often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided. The semi-structured interviews were

conducted with the VC' Construction Technology students, lecturers, and construction practitioners. There are three sets of interview questions developed in this research (Refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Questions Specification Table

Respondents	Construct	Number of Questions
Students of Construction Technology in VC	Problems faced by students during OJT	5
	Assessment rubric of OJT	1
Total: 6		
Lecturers of Construction Technology in VC	Problems faced by students during OJT	4
	Duration of OJT	1
	OJT placement	1
	Issues at the workplace	3
Total: 5	Assessment rubric of OJT	2
Construction practitioners	Problems faced by students during OJT	3
	Duration of OJT	1
Total: 6	Issues at the workplace	1
	Assessment rubric of OJT	2

Table 1 shows a construct for each respondent with some questions respectively. Construct provided including problems faced by students during OJT, duration of OJT, OJT placement, issues at the workplace and assessment rubric of OJT.

3. Results and Discussion

Interview Sessions Analysis

a) Interview Session with Construction Technology Students

During interviews, several themes surfaced regarding problems during OJT. These themes will be explained as follow:

- (1) Financial to pay for the fuel, food and room rent during OJT;
- (2) Transportation as some of the students do not have a license to drive or ride to the place they performed OJT;
- (3) Accommodation as students stay far from the place they performed OJT and that place situated at the crowded place;
- (4) Having an issue with the employer because students do not follow the instructions given by the employer;
- (5) Students learned through the conventional/old type of technologies however they were exposed to the modern type of technologies during OJT;
- (6) Allocation of marks in the assessment rubric is not commensurate with the construct assessed.

In this session, respondents mentioned that students learned through the conventional/old type of technologies however they were exposed to the modern type of technologies during their OJT. According to Owusu-Manu, Edwards, Holt, & Prince [10], higher education institutions thus need to ensure that training and educational provision is appropriately adjusted away from 'traditional' technical competencies and towards those aligned with business and management. The discrepancy between the conventional/old type of technologies in VC and modern type of technologies at the workplace will affect students' competency as they cannot apply their knowledge and skills learned in VC. Hence, the objective of OJT cannot be achieved if students cannot apply their knowledge and skills. Therefore, the level of knowledge and skills among students should be assessed, and these two elements should be in the OJT assessment rubric.

Also, allocation of marks is not commensurate with the construct assessed. One student commented that "Marks for presentation should be 15 marks instead of 10 marks". This finding revealed that there is a problem regarding the assessment of OJT.

It can be concluded that OJT has a mismatch in the type of technologies used at VC and the workplace besides assessment problem in OJT.

b) Interview Session with Construction Technology Lecturers

During the interview, several themes surfaced regarding problems during OJT. These themes will be explained as follow:

- (1) Lack of communication skill among students;
- (2) Students will not get any allowance if they did OJT at a small company;
- (3) Having a problem in report writing;
- (4) Lack of discipline;
- (5) Duration of OJT is not enough;
- (6) They did OJT at places which are not suitable for their course;
- (7) Job scope during OJT is not related to their course;
- (8) Syllabus learned in VC is not available in the industry;
- (9) Female students usually placed at the office rather than at the site which complicate them to apply the knowledge and skills learned at VC;
- (10) Assessment rubric used is too general which is not specific to the job scope and skills in the construction technology;
- (11) Allocation of marks for each element in the assessment rubric needs to be reviewed.

In this session, lecturers stated that there is lack of communication skill among students. Communication skill is crucial in OJT because students are able to communicate effectively at all stages is one of the objectives in OJT. If the communication problem continues, this will create issues for students in order to get guidance from the industry itself [11]. Therefore, communication skill should be assessed by the supervisor and should be included in the OJT assessment rubric.

Furthermore, students have difficulties in report writing. One lecturer said, "The boys usually have difficulties in completing their report than the girls." Report writing should be assessed and should be considered as one element in the OJT assessment rubric because another objective of the OJT is students are able to explain the tasks given during OJT according to the format given. Discipline is another element that should be put in OJT assessment rubric because one of the objectives in OJT is students are able to be professional and ethical in following the policies, procedures, and methods in the organization. Therefore, discipline should be one of the crucial element in the OJT assessment rubric.

Lecturers also find that the duration of OJT is short. One of them explained, "Six months will be more suitable for them to do OJT." According to Krish, Osman, Subahan, & Iksan [12], all respondents preferred to have a more extended period of industrial training as they need to cope with the new work culture.

Moreover, the respondents frequently cited, places that students went for OJT are not suitable for their course. Consequently, they faced difficulties in gaining knowledge and improving skills. This will affect their OJT assessment because they are not able to achieve the OJT objectives.

Another problem faced by students is the job scope during OJT is not related to their course. Most of the students who had performed industrial training cannot apply the skills learned because they were not given the opportunity to perform a task related to their course even they were placed at the suitable organization [13].

Other than that, syllabus learned in VC is not available in the industry and female students usually placed at the office rather than

at the site. This will result in a poor gain of knowledge and skills among students during OJT that will affect the objectives of OJT. The other problem that frequently cited was assessment rubric used is too general and not explicitly assessing the job scope and skills in construction technology, and allocation of marks in the assessment rubric need to be reviewed.

Therefore, it can be concluded that OJT placement, duration of OJT, job scope at workplace and syllabus in VC should be carefully determined as it will affect the competency of students

in the future. Meanwhile, assessment in OJT should be one of the primary concern in order to achieve the objectives of OJT.

c) Interview Session with Construction Practitioners

During this interview, several themes surfaced regarding problems during OJT. These themes will be explained as follow:

- (1) Lack of communication skill among students;
- (2) Transportation to the place to perform OJT;
- (3) Supervisors were busy with their job and did not have time to monitor the students;
- (4) Duration of OJT is not enough;
- (5) Students spent most of their time at the office compared to the site during OJT due to the safety reason;
- (6) Assessment rubric used is too general which is not specific to the job scope and skills in the construction technology;
- (7) Allocation of marks for each element in the assessment, the rubric needs to be reviewed.

In this session, the respondents frequently cited some supervisors did not concern in assigning tasks to the students, and when they are busy, they did not pay much attention to guide the students. Qualified staff to supervise the interns has been in short supply [14, 15].

Most respondents stated that the duration of OJT is not enough. Majority of interns think that the most appropriate internship should be six months [16] and believe they can learn more within a six month period [17]. According to Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF), duration of industrial training for four months is not adequate to expose the real situation of an in the industry to students, and this will create an issue when there are certain employers did not want to accept them because of the brief period for industrial training [13].

Some students spent most of their time at the office compared to the site due to safety reason. Safety at the workplace is a crucial factor that needs to be put into consideration when performing a task in order to be spared from the risk of harm especially from the aspect of self-safety, people around, machines, equipment, and free of sexual harassment [11].

The other problem that frequently cited was the assessment rubric used

is too general which is not specific to the job scope and skills in the construction technology, and the allocation of marks for each element in the assessment rubric needs to be reviewed.

It can be concluded that the role of supervisor and duration of OJT is essential in the implementation of OJT as well as assessment in OJT.

4. Conclusion

OJT helps students to develop their skills and expose them to the real working environment in order to be a competent worker. Moreover, they will apply their knowledge and skills learned in VC during OJT. However, it is believed that problems arise in OJT. Firstly, assessment in OJT. Secondly, the duration of OJT. Thirdly, OJT placement and job scope at the workplace. Fourthly, syllabus and type of technologies learned in VC. Therefore, further research is suggested to be conducted in studying the competency level of Malaysian Vocational College Construction Technology students after they undergo OJT.

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