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## Inculcation of Employability Skills in Technical and Vocational Education: The Knowledge of Employability Skills and Teaching Practices

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### Abstract

Employability skills are a requirement for TVE graduates to be eligible for employment. Employers not only place academic approval requirements and technical skills but employers emphasize employability skills. It becomes more complicated as employers shift the responsibility for inculcating these employability skills to educational institutions. Inculcating employability skills by TVE teachers is eSENTial in producing human capital that will drive the nation's progress and sustainability. Therefore, this study examines the level of inculcation of employability skills and knowledge of employability skills among TVE teacher as well as the relationship between these two variables. This quantitative survey involved 199 TVE teachers from Special Education Secondary Schools, in Malaysia. The instrument were adapted from Ab Halim's (2013); Ab Majid's (2017); Osman and Basar's (2015). The findings showed that the level of inculcating employability skills and TVE teacher's employability skill knowledge were at high-level with mean scores 4.28 (SD=0.441) and 3.92 (SD=0.38) respectively. Based on pearson correlation analysis, findings indicated that teacher's employability skill knowledge positively correlates with the inculcation of employability skills ( $r = 0.512, p .000$ ). The findings indicated that when teachers's employability skills knowledge is high or increases, this will also increase their behavior to inculcate employability skills among the students. This study gives the impression that teachers' knowledge of employability skills is very important for them to inculcate employability skills among the students. The findings of this study can be used as a reference by the Malaysian Ministry of Education in improving teaching competence among TVE educators. In addition, a continous teacher professional development training related to knowledge of employability skills should be provided to TVE teachers. It would be good if the Malaysian Ministry of Education could collaborate with stakeholders to get more information on employability skills required by employers and industries. With that, teachers can inculcate accurate employability skills among the students as preparation before they step out for employment. The further study uses a mixed method by adding elements of observation also interview is needed to handle the issue.

**Keywords:** Technical and Vocational Education, Employability Skills, Student with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

## Introduction

The education system is the main catalyst for developing social and economic capital in the country until it is recognised by the world (MOE, 2013). Thus, in ensuring the successful transformation of education, the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has been enacted to achieve the government's aspiration. The key factor in ensuring that the transformation of education is enforced and that students succeed is the quality of teaching (MOE, 2013). Apart from that, teachers' challenges are not only in delivering the academic curriculum but also in inculcating employability skills or 21st-century skills (Br Sitepu et al., 2020; Jam & Puteh, 2022; Trzmiel et al., 2014). New teaching strategies and methods need to be implemented to ensure the goal can be achieved.

In pursuit of this educational transformation achievement, various initiatives were inculcated employment, including taking feedback from employers or industry on graduates produced through the planned education system. As a result, technical and Vocational Education (TVE) graduates are often the industry's choice in meeting their industry needs (Bakar, 2017). However, feedback from the industry found that TVE graduates are still weak in demonstrating employability skills. The shortage is due to the failure of educational institutions to apply employability skills among TVE graduates (Lisa et al., 2019).

The situation is complicated when discussing the issue of employability skills involving graduates of students with special educational needs (SEN). According to Osukwu (2019), employers believe teachers were lacking in emphasis on communication skills, teamwork, innovation, creativity, and critical thinking. In addition, it was reported that SEN graduates do not have job-seeking skills, no skills in writing resumes and do not have good ethics when faced with employers (Hanapi et al., 2018).

Note that students with SEN refer to individuals who face physical, mental, intellectual or sensory developmental problems over a long period, which reduce their ability to interact and interfere with their involvement in community-related activities (Persons with Disabilities Act, 2008). Students with SEN have been categorised according to their disabilities, i.e., visual, hearing, and speech impaired, physically disabled, learning problems, as well as multiple disabilities, for example, having more than one disability problem MoE (2014a) In this study, students with SEN at vocational special education secondary school are disabled students aged 16 to 18 following the Malaysian Skills Certificate training.

Past researchers have pioneered studies on the issues and challenges of employability skills. However, studies on the inculcation of employability skills still need to be studied, especially for TVE teachers who teach students with SEN.

## Problem Statement

Employers are not satisfied with the performance shown by SEN graduates. A study by Sairi (2017) reported that employer's acceptance of SEN graduates was less than satisfactory. This finding is also supported by the MoE (2021), which reported that the issue of unemployment among SEN graduates increased to 42% in 2021, recording an increase compared to 32% in the previous year. Other than that, SEN performance is employer's main focus Duvdevany et al (2016) and employers will lose confidence in SEN graduates when they cannot demonstrate the required employability skills (Osukwu, 2019). Additionally, Bohari (2016) stated that employers have a low perception of SEN graduates due to their mastery of communication, the use of technology tools, problem-solving skills, and poor team working skills. Educational institutions need to address the skill gap between the employer or industry requirements and students with SEN (Zuhdi et al., 2017; Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021). Therefore, this study needs

to be conducted to see the inculcation of TVE teacher's employability skills for students with SEN.

### **Research Objective**

- i. Determining the level of inculcation of employability skills and knowledge of employability skills among Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) teachers.
- ii. Identifying the relationship between knowledge of employability skills and the inculcation of employability skills among Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) teachers.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What is the inculcation of employability skills among Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) teachers?
- ii. What is the level of knowledge of employability skills among Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) teachers?
- iii. What is the relationship between knowledge of employability skills and the inculcation of employability skills among Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) teachers?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Inculcation of Employability Skills**

According to the Ten Employability Skills, ten elements need to be applied to every graduate who will enter the world of work, namely a positive attitude, communication, teamwork, self-management, willingness to learn, thinking skills, resilience, innovation, entrepreneurship and cultural competence (Fraser et al., 2019). Meanwhile, according to the Employability Skills Framework, positive attitudes, communication, teamwork, self-management, willingness to learn, thinking, and resilience skills are employability skills that graduates need to apply (TEC, 2016). Other than that, the SCAN model also defines employability skills as basic skills, thinking skills, personal qualities, resource skills, information skills, interpersonal skills, system skills and technology skills as employability skills (SCAN, 2000). Therefore, based on past studies, it can be concluded that employability skills are skills that graduates need to have in preparation to compete in the job market to obtain and maintain employment. Past researchers have reported various models for employability skills, but in the context of this study, researchers chose The Ten Employability Skills model, (Fraser et al., 2019).

In Malaysia, many TVE teachers who teach in schools have technical skills but lack the opportunity to improve their professional training, including employability skills (Mohamad et al., 2017). Note that employability skills are not a specific subject but need to be instilled to prepare graduates for the world of work (Ab Halim et al., 2019; Yusof et al., 2020; Nagele & Stalder, 2017). Employability skills can also be conveyed explicitly and implicitly, requiring effective strategies and approaches through Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) subjects (Fraser et al., 2019). According to Trzmiel et al., (2014), TVE has applied traditional employability skills among graduates. Still, emphasis and attention need to be given so that the development of graduates can be done holistically and focus on graduate work preparation.

On the other hand, Clokie & Fourie (2016) opined that clear coursework about inculcating employability skills during T&L is vital. Concurrently, Prontadavit & Hanvatananukul (2017) reported that employability skills have been integrated with the TVE course and are highly

emphasised but need improvement. To overcome the contradiction regarding the employability skills demonstrated by graduates, the collaboration between industry and educational institutions is essential to support the learning and future career of graduates (Clokie & Fourie, 2016; Hanapi, 2015; Kinash et al., 2016; Langorgen & Magnus, 2020; Shaffeei et al., 2020).

For SEN graduates, employability skills need to be imparted in a planned and effective manner because they can illustrate good performance compared to typical graduates if given complete training (Langorgen & Magnus, 2020; Yusof et al., 2020; Olsson et al., 2018). Employability skills among SEN graduates are critical because employers will emphasise their work performance and not be influenced by other factors (Duvdevany et al., 2016). Other than that, Osukwu (2019) reports that employers are not confident about the disabled because they do not have the skills required for employment, especially women.

#### *The Knowledge of Employability Skills*

The key to quality education is teacher quality, and one aspect of teacher quality is knowledge (Harris & Sass, 2011). According to Shulman (1998), teachers with high content knowledge can guarantee the implementation of T&L well. Meanwhile, Salehudin et al (2015) presented that proactive teachers must always be ready to equip themselves with knowledge of the content of the subjects being taught and ensure that the T&L implemented is beneficial to the students. Subsequently, Nahar & Safar (2017) support that the teacher's knowledge in teaching should prioritise the current challenging educational needs. A good and fair learning environment for diverse student abilities can also be created when teachers have high content knowledge (Kamaruzaman & Alias, 2020).

Furthermore, previous studies have found that TVE teachers in Asia have poor knowledge, skills, pedagogy, and T&L implementation resources (Trzmiel et al., 2014). The fact is that quality and prepared teachers from various forms, including the knowledge of employability skills, are critical in inculcating employability skills (Abd Aziz, 2020). Likewise, Toha@Tohara's study (2021) established that teachers' knowledge about digital literacy relates to digital literacy teaching and learning (T&L) practices. This study is also supported by previous studies that stated that teachers' knowledge of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) relates to T&L practices for IR 4.0 education (Jam and Puteh, 2022). Likewise, this study focuses on the relationship between teacher's content knowledge and the inculcation of TVE teacher employability skills at vocational special education secondary schools.

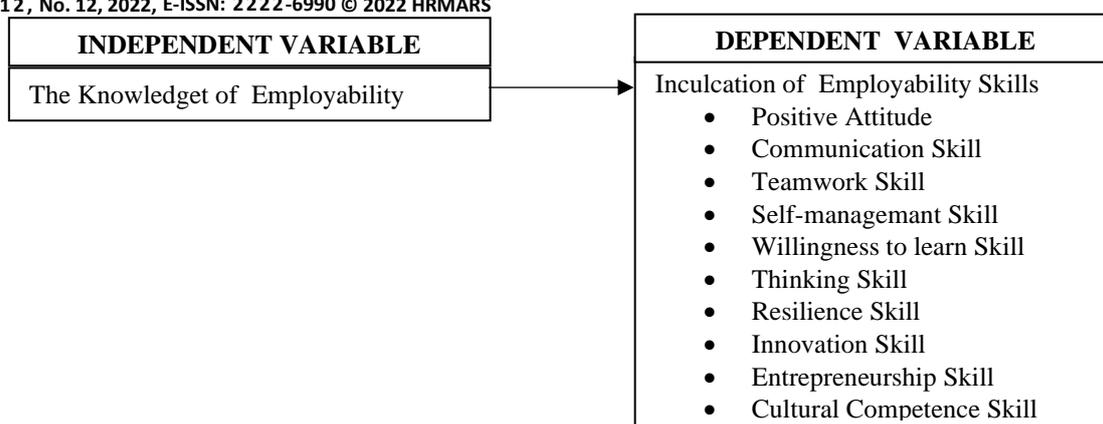


Diagram 1: Research Framework

### Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991)

This theory was founded by Ajzen (1991) and is also known as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by past scholars. This theory is a framework of attitudes and behaviours formed based on the Causal Action Theory founded by (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). This theory is one of the leading social-psychological models often used as a reference by past scholars in various fields (Ajzen, 2015). It is noteworthy to point out that the TPB is similar to other cognitive decision-making models because its basic principle is that individuals will make systematic and rational decisions based on the information obtained (Ajzen, 1991). This theory explains how a person's behaviour is linked to his belief in something psychologically. Other than that, most models of behavioural practice have their own opinions in determining the predictors of behaviour. The TPB states that intention is the most proximal predictor of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

According to this theory, a combination of attitudes, subject norms and behavioural control perceived by an individual will produce intentions and subsequently produce planned behaviour. Individual readiness is measured through the behaviour shown based on the intention formed. The concept of behavioural control is a new predictor of behaviour in the TPB. In this study, perceived behavioural control refers to the teacher's employability skill knowledge in inculcation employability skills in their daily T&L, which is the extent to which teachers can control that behaviour. Correspondingly, people tend to do certain behaviours because they feel they can succeed, which is to achieve what has been targeted based on their knowledge.

### Study Methodology

#### Study Design

The research entailed the use of a survey study. This study aims to examine the level and relationship between the independent variables of employability skills knowledge and the inculcation of employability skills. The study population consists of teachers currently teaching Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) courses at vocational special education secondary schools throughout Malaysia, 246 teachers whose sampling is intended to involve the entire population (N = 246).

### Study Instrument

A set of questionnaires was shared with all respondents, and the obtained responses were analysed and generalised to the study population. Questionnaire administration is more practical and effective in terms of time and cost because the study covers a large population size with the respondent's positions far from each other (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Subsequently, this action can reduce the researcher's influence and prejudice while encouraging respondents to find more accurate and true answers. The questionnaire used in this study is an adaptation and modification from (Ab Halim, 2013; Ab Majid, 2017; Alang Osman and Basar, 2015). For the knowledge of employability skills questionnaire, there are 13 items. Meanwhile, the section on the inculcation of employability skills consists of 40 items.

### Findings

#### Level of Inculcation of Employability Skills and Knowledge of Employability Skills Among TVE Teachers

Referring to Table 1, the findings show that respondents have a high level of inculcating employability skills ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SP = 0.03$ ). This finding means that TVE teachers have reached a level of good employability skills according to the interpretation of the five-point Likert scale employability skill application used in this study.

Table 1 found that the dimension of communication skills recorded the highest mean ( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SP = 0.49$ ). At the same time, the dimension of innovation skills recorded a mean ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SP = 0.68$ ), which is the lowest mean compared to the other nine dimensions. Consequently, it can be observed that all dimensions recorded a good mean reading, which shows that teacher's inculcation of employability skills is positive.

Table 2

*Distribution of Items for the Inculcation of TVE Teacher Employability Skills According to Dimensions*

Inculcation of Employability Skills Dimensions	Mean score (M)	Standard deviation (SD)
Communication skills	4.57	0.491
Self Management Skills	4.43	0.491
Teamwork Skills	4.43	0.544
Positive attitude	4.39	0.522
Willingness To Learn	4.23	0.530
Entrepreneurial Skills	4.23	0.546
Resilience Skills	4.19	0.607
Thinking skills	4.14	0.578
Cultural Competency Skills	4.14	0.619
Innovation Skills	4.05	0.677
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.28</b>	<b>0.441</b>

Table 3 presents the mean score of the overall knowledge of employability skills ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SP = 0.38$ ) at a high level. The item with the highest mean score was "Sufficient knowledge about the skills of working in a team", with a value of ( $M 4.18$ ,  $SP = 0.55$ ). Meanwhile, the item with the lowest mean score is "Sufficient knowledge about innovation skills", with a mean value of

(M = 3.81, SP = 0.38). This finding exhibits that teachers have good knowledge of employability skill.

Table 3

*Level of Employability Skill Knowledge*

Variables	Mean score (M)	Standard deviation (SD)
Level of Knowledge About Employability Skills	3.92	0.38

### The relationship between Knowledge of Employability Skill and the Inculcation of Employability Skills among TVE Teachers

Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between knowledge of employability skills and the inculcation of employability skills by TVE teachers. Based on Table 4, it was established that there is a positive and significant relationship between knowledge of employability skill and the inculcation of employability skills ( $r = 0.512$ ,  $p = .000$ ). On the other hand, the relationship according to dimensions, resilience skills ( $r = 0.503$ ,  $p = .000$ ) is the strongest, while the weakest relationship is communication skills ( $r = 0.208$ ,  $p = .003$ ). This finding suggests that teachers who know employability skills can effectively inculcate employability skills among TVE students with SEN. Table 3 displays the knowledge of the future of employability.

Table 4

*The Relationship between Knowledge of Employability Skills With the Inculcation of Employability Skills*

Application of Employability Skills	Knowledge of Employability Skills	P
Resilience skills	.503**	.000
Innovation skills	.484**	.000
Thinking skills	.440**	.000
Willing to learn	.437**	.000
Entrepreneurial skills	.425**	.000
Cultural competence skills	.416**	.000
Positive attitude skills	.369**	.000
Teamwork skills	.367**	.000
Self Management Skills	.303**	.000
Communication skills	.208**	.003
<b>Overall Relationship</b>	<b>.512**</b>	<b>.000</b>

## Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion

### a. Inculcation of Employability Skills

The inculcation of employability skills also refers to 21st-century learning. The findings of this study show that the inculcation of employability skills is at a high level, as it produces the impression that TVE teachers have successfully inculcated employability skills into SEN. This finding is in line with the findings (Amatan & Han, 2019; Fettes et al., 2020; Kashefpakdel et al., 2019; Yusof et al., 2020). Other than that, this finding demonstrates that the weakness of

employability skills is not caused by the failure of teachers to instil those skills among students with SEN.

Among the factors contributing to the inculcation of employability skills being at a high level may be because 72% of TVE teachers are teachers who have served for 4 years and above, i.e., the category of skilled teachers and expert teachers. In inculcating employability skills, experience in implementing T&L TVE is crucial in planning activities that can inculcate employability skills. The completion of effective activities can not only attract interest but also employability skills can be inculcated among students with SEN. However, the study by Amin (2018); Hanapi et al (2018); Bohari (2016) discovered that SEN graduates employability skills are weak. This finding may be due to the SEN graduate's limited ability factor compared to normal individuals (MOE, 2014). Note that employers aim that the employability skills possessed by SEN graduates are the same as normal individuals. Therefore, it is suggested that employers and the industry also need to be prepared to accept SEN graduates. Not only providing appropriate facilities according to their ability, but the mental and physical preparation of the employer is also important by attending training related to handling the disabled. This move is in response to the government's call to empower the disabled and meet their human rights needs, as they also need income to continue living (Omar et al., 2020).

#### **b. The Knowledge of Employability Skill**

The findings of this study show that the respondent's knowledge of employability skill is at a high level. This finding gives the impression that teachers master the concept of employability skill knowledge that is skill-oriented across the curriculum well. Apart from that, this finding is in line with Abd Aziz's (2020); Fadzilah's (2017); Mamat's (2017) studies. This finding may be due to the Ministry of Education encouragement towards the culture of learning in the 21st century (MoE, 2020, 2013). Hence, the Ministry of Education's (MoE) policies encourages TVE teachers to improve their performance. This can be seen through the findings of open questions regarding the training required by teachers. Therefore, TVE teachers are optimistic about responding to the MoE's call, but they need appropriate exposure and training. Other than that, TVE teachers have qualifications based on education specialist qualifications and are supported by Malaysian Skills Certificate (MSC) qualifications (Toha@Tohara et al., 2021). The MSC qualification is one level higher than the student level, which is the main requirement for TVE teachers (DSD, 2021). This shows that TVE teachers specialise in their respective fields and do not face any problems understanding the TVE curriculum (du Plessis, 2015) as well as the knowledge of employability skills. Therefore, to ensure that the knowledge of employability skills is in line with the needs of employers, teacher professionalism training is critical to ensure that teachers are always competent throughout their service.

#### **c. The Relationship between Knowledge of Employability Skills with the Inculcation of Employability Skills**

The Pearson correlation test conducted on the data of this study found a positive and strong significant relationship between knowledge of employability skills and the inculcation of employability skills. Based on the findings, it can be understood that the level of employability skill knowledge possessed by TVE teachers is related to inculcating employability skills. Correspondingly, this finding is in line with the study of Shulman (1998), who reported that teacher's teaching and learning process (T&L) depends on the knowledge mastered by the teacher. This finding supports that a teacher's expertise is dependent on the mastery of

content knowledge to enable teachers to achieve the objectives and goals of T&L (Abd Aziz, 2020; Toha@Tohara et al., 2021). Besides, Ab Majid (2017) stated that knowledge of the content of a field or discipline is one of the important elements in the T&L process. According to Shulman (1987), T&L will happen perfectly if the teacher has good content knowledge. Yusof et al (2020) also presents that knowledge of employability skill will impact the inculcation of employability skills.

On the other hand, this finding provides the impression that teachers in the specialisation can master the field they teach and know how to inculcate employability skills well among students with SEN. Therefore, this indicates that the placement of teachers in the TVE field is crucial in ensuring that the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 is achieved.

The fact is that employability skills have been revealed by teachers to students from the primary education level up to higher education as enshrined in the national education philosophy. Note that education is a continuous process (MoE, 2017). With that, all teachers at every level of education need to understand the concept of employability skills. This is because these soft skills need to be cultivated in everyday life, and this process takes a long time to be inculcated perfectly. The government's efforts on this matter can be seen through encouraging 21st-century learning and its dimension of employability skills. The importance of employability skills must be conveyed to all teachers, especially TVE teachers who teach students with SEN. Therefore, 21st-century learning practices must be continued to ensure that the employability skills of TVE SEN graduates can be properly implemented.

### **Conclusion**

The teacher is the key to every field of knowledge and is responsible as a conveying agent to students to achieve every educational goal outlined. The knowledge of employability skills of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) teachers should be in line with the patterns of employability skills required by employers. This situation is because the success of teachers in inculcating employability skills also has a strong connection with teacher's employability skills knowledge. Teachers who acquire employability skills can plan the inculcation of employability skills through various activities using strategies. Therefore, training to improve professionalism, industry cooperation, and the placement of TVE teachers must be emphasised to ensure that employability skills are always optimal. This matter needs to be taken seriously because the success of teachers in inculcating employability skills guarantees a future career for SEN graduates. In addition, employers' stigma against SEN graduates needs to be refined because SEN has limited self-ability and requires income to continue living (Jaya et al., 2018; Omar et al., 2020). Hence, employers need to prepare to accept employees from SEN graduates. This preparation is not just about providing suitable facilities; they will be required to follow training related to handling disabled workers. This should be considered as addressing issues related to the career of SEN graduates demand cooperation from all parties and does not depend on one party only.

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