

# **The Marketability of National Dual Training System (NDTS) Graduates in the Industry**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In line with the government's policy to improve and streamline skills training in the country, the government took the initiative to upgrade and develop the teaching and learning methods of the skills training system. One of the efforts is the implementation of National Dual Training System (NDTS), which provides special trainings to produce advanced skilled workers that meet the requirements of the industry. This study investigates the marketability of NDTS graduates based on the aspect of marketability in the industry to help the management and accredited centres identify the needs of employers. The objective of the study is to assess the marketability factor of NDTS graduates based on their productivity, the number of hired graduates at a company, salary offered, and the duration in securing employment after they graduate. The study focused on the employers and employees in three main sectors- Government-Linked Companies (GLCs), Multi-National Corporation (MNC) and Small Medium Enterprise (SMEs). The study is a descriptive survey study, which also applied the quantitative method. The instrument utilized was a set of questionnaire, which was analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics version 20.0. The perspective of employers and NDTS-graduate employees was also evaluated to determine their scale of recognition on productivity, work quality and program implementation, and also the SLDN graduates themselves. The overall findings substantiate that employers and employees had a positive perception towards the marketability of NDTS graduates in the industry. This shows that employers, especially those from the SMEs were supportive of the implementation of the programme to produce competent and competitive workers for the industry.

Keywords: Duration of Securing Employment, Productivity, Recognition, Salary

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the 10<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan (RMK10), the government initiated a transformation in the skills training education system to produce knowledgeable and innovative manpower that could propel the nation to achieve the status of a developed nation by the year 2020. Hence, the National Dual Training Scheme (NDTS) was implemented, which was adapted from the German dual system. The system involves two learning processes from 20 to 30% of theoretical lessons at training institutions, while between 70 to 80% training is on-site, at a chosen workplace,

either through day-release or block-release. The dual system implementation has provided opportunities for school dropouts and industrial workers that need paper qualifications to advance in their career at the workplace.

In 2010, a report was published by the Department of Skills Development (DSD) which reported that only 72.7% of NDTs graduates had been employed after graduating the training programme. The findings also showed that only 70.1% of them were employed in less than six months after graduating. The response from the graduates highlighted that 45.5% of them found it difficult to secure employment due to a number of factors, such as low salary, lack of experience, and a mismatch between the job and their qualification. The report offered a few suggestions on ways to improve the marketability of NDTs graduates in the future, like by developing the trainees' social skills and social values, providing incentives to companies that hire the graduates, and boost promotions of the scheme to GLC and MNC corporations. Since then, no study has been carried out to identify the employers' response towards the NDTs graduates' aspect of marketability.

Hence, it is important to conduct a research on the scale of recognition towards the NDTs graduates' marketability in order for the training institutes to gauge the current needs of employers and the industry. It is expected that this research will provide a guideline on the industry and employers' perspective on the NDTs' implementation to JPK and KSM. The findings will provide an insight into the employers and employees' perspective on the aspect of marketability of the NDTs graduates in the industry. It is also expected to offer guidelines on the employers' scale of recognition from the aspects of mobility, offered salary, and the number of graduates who get job offers according to the field of study. It is also hoped that the research will be able to provide an indicator to the agencies responsible in planning and implementing the NDTs to improve the program.

## **MARKETABILITY AND THE JOB MARKET**

The current job market is regarded as dynamic, as it is always changing based on the needs and trends, affected by the competitive use of technology, and demands from employers and the industry. A study carried out by Arocena et al. (2007) shows that in the past decade, technological advances, the global market, and increased competition, are aligned to the increase in demand for workers. The introduction of more flexible rules has seen a reduction in steps of protection in the job market that allow companies to adjust their workforce based on the robust market that keeps transforming. The flexibility of the job market has created problems to workers as it leads to reduced number of posts, restructuring, transfers, and even plant closures. At the same time, unanticipated types of positions are created, like part-time and contract posts. The flexibility in the job market has led to uncertainties, as employers will only retain specific jobs. The issues are linked to the economic and political stability of a country as they are mainly due to foreign investors that have contributed to many job opportunities offered by their operations.

From the aspect of economy, Juhdi et al. (2010) explains that '*...employees have to stay marketable given the uncertain economic condition...*'. Meanwhile, Tome (2007) claims that the relation between employability and marketability is '*...Employability based in the growth of employment in the economy...*'. He further explains that '*...An employer would hire a person who is valuable for the company and the value is measured in terms of his productivity and quality of performance...*'. Based on the definition by National Productivity Agency (1997), productivity is defined by output value or quantity produced by a certain input. Meanwhile, Ryser (1996) explains that theory of productivity refers to the anticipated connection or productivity theory, actual accumulation, or total productivity and monthly productivity. His findings highlight that productivity is correlated to the rate of productivity generated by a number of workers within a certain period of time, and not just specific to specific fields of study. Hayes (2005) finds that most employers were focused on the process of productivity and performance of their employees, and they were always looking for the best solution to overcome labour shortage to maintain their company's credibility. De Vos reports that '*...Marketability refers to a positive career outcome of this potential, i.e. the perceptions regarding one's added value at the (internal or external) labour market*'. He claims that to retain marketability in the industry, one needs more than just employability skills (technical skills, knowledge and attitude), as it is now imperative to provide support and attachment towards career development.

McQuaid (2006) finds that there was evidence of employability factor and a mismatch or gap of job availability in determining one's marketability. The skills level and mismatch in the local job market is dependent on the local economy, employers, job seekers, and job positions available. Other researchers have voiced similar concerns, that the marketability of graduates is much dependant on the suitability of field of study and job offers, skills, working experience, and economic recession affecting a country (Yussof, 2008). The statement serves as a guideline for the researcher in measuring the degree of marketability for NDTs graduates in the job market.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method of the study is descriptive in nature, hence the method used was quantitative (*Standardised survey questionnaire*) and qualitative (*Semi structured interviews* and *Focused Group Discussion*). The descriptive survey method was applied as it could provide important data for the research and could provide the researchers with better information on the phenomena studied (Gajendra, 1981). The qualitative method was employed as it could assist the researchers to focus on the phenomena in question (Gall et al., 2003). For the quantitative study, the instrument used was questionnaire; while for the qualitative study, interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were the methods applied. The sample was determined based on Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) sampling method. For the quantitative method, two sets of questionnaire were prepared (for employers and NDTs graduates). The researchers then met the respondents personally based on data received from JPK. The data collected based on the two sets of questionnaire are shown in the following Tables 1.0 and 2.0.

Table 1.0 : Data based on NDTS-Employer Respondents' Questionnaire

Parts	Data
A	Demographic data including gender, ethnicity, occupation, and age;
B	Company information such as the type of industry, number of workers, number of NDTS graduate workers, projected starting salary, company operation period, and method of hiring NDTS graduates
C	Employees' attitude
D	Technical skill
E	Occupational knowledge
F	Occupational Productivity
G	Social skills
H	Overall Opinion
Recommendations on Improvisation	

Table 2.0 : Data based on NDTS-Worker Respondents' Questionnaire

Parts	Data
A	Demographic data including gender, ethnicity, marital status, state, age, highest academic qualification;
B	Data on training and skills – training centre, NDTS company, training duration, completion date, highest qualification, NDTS training completion duration, field of NDTS training.
C	Data on graduates' occupation – job status, the duration in securing a job after graduating, identify whether the current post is secured using NDTS certificate, job information, work experience, average starting salary, current salary, data on job placement.
D	Technical skills
E	Occupational knowledge
F	Attitude
G	Occupational Productivity
H	Social skills
I	Overall opinion
Recommendations on Improvisation	

The analysis on the data was done using the IBM Statistics version 20.0 software. From the analysis, the findings was in the form of frequency, percentage and mean. Every item was analyzed, grouped according to aspects, and presented in the form of tables of frequency, percentage and mean. Once the data were processed, a conclusion was made to identify the marketability of NDTS graduates in the industry. Apart from that, the FGD were conducted among employers to gather ideas and feedback to reinforce the quantitative study. The research also conducted the structured interview technique upon the two groups of the

research respondent **strata** to collect and gather more accurate data from the respondents' actual situation.

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A total of 372 NDTs workers and 315 employers from *Government-Linked Companies* (GLCs) and Small Medium Enterprise (SMEs) from six zones in Malaysia, that are the North Zone, South Zone, East Zone, West Zone and Sabah and Sarawak participated in the study. To determine the marketability of NDTs workers, a few assessments were carried out, including the magnitude of employer recognition towards the workers, the perception on work productivity based on quality and quantity, the number of workers hired by a company, the offered salary, and the current status of the NDTs graduates. The analysis was conducted to clarify the following research question: Do the NDTs employees fit the industry's marketability requirements from the aspects of productivity and scale of employer recognition?

Based on the overall mean score of marketability scale, it was established that there was not much disparity between the perspective of employers and NDTs workers from the aspects of marketability, as it shows just a slight difference in mean score, at 0.0943 (Table 3.0). The overall mean score only encompasses the perception of employers and employees based on the aspect of work productivity and their recognition towards the program and NDTs workers only.

Table 3.0: Average Mean Score on the Scale of Marketability from the Perspective of Employers and NDTs Employees

Statistics	Average mean score– Marketability	
	Employers' perspective	Employees' perspective
N	313	370
Missing	2	2
Mean	4.2192	4.3135
Standard Deviation	.56930	.48902

Table 4.0 shows that the percentage of employed NDTs workers was 99.5%, while the remaining percentage of graduates was found to have continued their studies while only one respondent had not found a suitable job. From 363 working graduates (2 did not provide data), 87.9% used their NDTs certificates in securing their jobs.

The findings indicated that 60.6% of the employees (200) secured employment within one to two months upon completing their NDTs training, while 25.8% (85) were employed

immediately upon completing their training. It also established that 66.5% of the graduates' starting salary was below RM1,000, while 28.5% received a starting salary between RM1,000 to RM1,500. When comparisons were made between the starting salary and the current salary, it was discovered that the percentage of those receiving an income of more than RM2,500 had increased to 3.0% compared to 1.4% previously. Currently, the data showed that 60.2% of the employees were getting salaries of more than RM1,000 compared to the starting salary they initially received, where only 33.5% were paid more than RM1,000 (Table 2.0).

Table 4.0: NDTs graduates' Job status based on the highest NDTs certification

		HIGHEST LEVEL OF CERTIFICATE									
		MSC 1		MSC 2		MSC 3		MSD		TOTAL	
		Total	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
Graduates' job Status	Working	50	13.6	199	54.2	113	30.8	3	0.8	365	99.5
	Further studies	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3
	Unemployed	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>51</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>54.2</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Current job using NDTs certificate	Yes	42	11.6	174	47.9	100	27.5	3	0.8	319	87.9
	No	9	2.5	22	6.1	12	3.3	1	0.3	44	12.1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>51</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>54.0</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>100.0</b>
The duration graduates are hired upon graduating	Continue working	16	4.8	35	10.6	34	10.3	0	0.0	85	25.8
	< 1 month	17	5.2	122	37.0	61	18.5	0	0.0	200	60.6
	1 - 2 months	5	1.5	7	2.1	4	1.2	0	0.0	16	4.8
	3 - 4 months	4	1.2	2	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	1.8
	5 - 6 months	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.3	0	0.0	2	0.6
	> 6 months	3	0.9	14	4.2	4	1.2	0	0.0	21	6.4
<b>JUMLAH</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>54.8</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>100.0</b>
The starting salary upon completion of training	< RM 1,000	38	10.5	152	42.1	49	13.6	1	0.3	240	66.5
	RM 1,000 - 1,500	9	2.5	42	11.6	50	13.9	2	0.6	103	28.5
	RM 1,501 - 2,000	2	0.6	1	0.3	6	1.7	0	0.0	9	2.5
	RM 2,001 - 2,500	1	0.3	1	0.3	2	0.6	0	0.0	4	1.1
	> RM 2,500	0	0.0	1	0.3	4	1.1	0	0.0	5	1.4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>54.6</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Current salary	< RM 1,000	30	8.2	91	25.0	23	6.3	1	0.3	145	39.8
	RM 1,000 - 1,500	15	4.1	68	18.7	58	15.9	2	0.5	143	39.3
	RM 1,501 - 2,000	3	0.8	23	6.3	16	4.4	0	0.0	42	11.5
	RM 2,001 -	2	0.5	10	2.7	11	3.0	0	0.0	23	6.3

	2,500										
	> RM 2,500	1	0.3	4	1.1	6	1.6	0	0.0	11	3.0
TOTAL		51	14.0	196	53.8	114	31.3	3	0.8	364	100.0

Based on the findings, it was found that 82.1% employers hired less than 20 SLDN workers in their companies. SMEs, with the highest number of respondents (80.4%) reportedly had the lowest number of NDTS graduates as their staff. When it comes to hiring staff, it was found that 37.1% of employers preferred to employ NDTS graduates as employees, rather than training their own staff. However, data showed that 28.8% of employers used both methods in hiring employees. As for the starting salary, it was established that 62.6% of the employers offered between RM1,000 to RM1,500 (Table 5.0).

Table 5.0: Breakdown of total number of NDTS graduates hired based on company category

		COMPANY CATEGORY							
		SME		MNC		GLC		TOTAL	
		Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
The hiring method of NDTS graduates	Train their own staff as NDTS employees	96	30.7	7	2.2	4	1.3	107	34.2
	Hire 1 NDTS graduate as new staff	111	35.5	1	0.3	4	1.3	116	37.1
	All of the above	83	26.5	4	1.3	3	1.0	90	28.8
TOTAL		290	92.7	12	3.8	11	3.5	313	100.0
No of NDTS graduates	< 20	251	80.4	2	0.6	3	1.0	256	82.1
	21 to 40	19	6.1	3	1.0	1	0.3	23	7.4
	41 to 60	6	1.9	0	0.0	5	1.6	11	3.5
	61 to 80	3	1.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.0
	81 to 100	3	1.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.0
	>100	7	2.2	7	2.2	2	0.6	16	5.1
TOTAL		289	92.6	12	3.8	11	3.5	312	100.0
Average starting salary	< RM 1000	86	27.5	1	0.3	1	0.3	88	28.1
	RM 1000 - RM 1500	184	58.8	4	1.3	8	2.6	196	62.6
	RM 1501 - RM 2000	17	5.4	7	2.2	1	0.3	25	8.0
	RM 2001 - RM 2500	4	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	1.3
	> RM 2,500	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL		291	93.0	12	3.8	10	3.2	313	100.0

The following section will further specify the analysis of each element measured from the aspect of marketability.

### **ANALYSIS ON THE PERSPECTIVE OF JOB PRODUCTIVITY**

On average, the mean score value for NDTs graduates' job productivity from the perspective of employers was 4.1186, while it was 4.2541 (Table 6.0) from the perspective of employees. Most employers deemed that the NDTs workers had achieved a certain expected quality, based on the highest mean score of the sub-construct compared to others (Table 7.0). However, from the perspective of employees, they believed that they could fulfil the services as stipulated by clients (Table 8.0).

Table 6.0: Average mean score on the Job Productivity from the Perspective of Employers and NDTs Employees

Statistics	Average Mean score – Job productivity	
	Employers' perspective	Employees' perspective
N	313	369
Missing	2	3
Mean	4.0935	4.2475
Standard Deviation	.62328	.52375



**Table 7.0: Summary of Mean Score of Employers' Perception on NDTs Employees' Job Productivity**

**Descriptive Statistics – Job Productivity**

Items measured from the Perspective of Employers	N	Percentage of scale (%)					Mean score	Standard Deviation
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree		
Achieve work quality target	313	0.0	1.3	10.2	62.3	26.2	4.13	.631
Achieve work quantity target	313	.6	1.6	9.9	62.6	25.2	4.10	.681
Provide services as stipulated by clients	313	0.0	2.6	11.5	60.1	25.9	4.09	.685
Better work quality compared to non-NDTS graduates	313	.6	3.2	16.0	51.4	28.8	4.04	.795

**Table 8.0: Summary of Mean Score of NDTs Employees' Perception on Job Productivity**

**Descriptive Statistics – Work Productivity**

Items measured from the Perspective of Employees	N	Percentage of scale (%)					Mean score	Standard Deviation
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree		
Provide services as stipulated by clients	368	.3	.3	5.2	62.2	32.1	4.26	.586
Achieve work quality target	369	0.0	.3	7.6	58.5	33.6	4.25	.599
Achieve work quantity target	369	0.0	.3	7.3	61.2	31.2	4.23	.585

To assess the level of employer perception towards the NDTs employees' according to the positive, neutral and negative scales, the response scale was categorized into three groups. The analysis found that 88.5% of employers responded positively (agree and strongly agree) towards the work productivity of the NDTs graduates. However, 3.8% of employers responded negatively when the work quality of NDTs graduates and non-NDTS graduates were compared (Table 9.0). The findings showed that the mean score was consistent, as the sub-construct recorded the lowest mean score.

Table 9.0: Percentage of Employers’ response on NDTS Employees’ Job Productivity according to scale of perception

Items	Percentage level (%)		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Achieve work quality target	1.3	10.2	88.5
Achieve work quantity target	2.2	9.9	87.9
Provide services as stipulated by clients	2.6	11.5	85.9
Better work quality compared to non-NDTS graduates	3.8	16.0	80.2

The findings showed that 94.3% of employees had a positive perception towards the services they provided in fulfilling their clients’ expectations. However, 0.5% employees provided negative feedbacks towards the services provided to their clients (Table 10.0).

Table 10.0: Percentage of NDTS Employees’ Response towards their Job Productivity according to scale of perception

Items	Percentage (%)		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Provide services as demanded by clients	0.5	5.2	94.3
Achieve work quantity target	0.3	7.3	92.4
Achieve work quality target	0.3	7.6	92.1

### Analysis on the scale of Recognition (Program & Employees)

The scale of recognition by the employers were analyzed based on three main factors that are (1) the extent of employer recognition of NDTS graduates based on job and salary offered; (2) the involvement of employers in the NDTS program implementation; and (3) the contribution of employers in introducing the program to other companies. The analysis found that the average mean score on the employers’ perception was 4.3450, while the employees’ perception was recorded at 4.3820 (Table 11.0).

Table 11.0: Average Mean score of the NDTS recognition from the perception of Employers and Employees

Statistics	Average mean score– NDTS recognition	
	Employers’ Perception	Employees’ Perception
N	313	370
Missing	2	2
Mean	4.3450	4.3820
Standard deviation	.65769	.61059

Table 12.0 Average Mean score of the NDTS recognition from the perception of Employers

Descriptive Statistics – Recognition								
Items measured from the Perception of Employers	N	Percentage of scale (%)					Mean score	Standard Deviation
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree		
Continue the implementation of NDTS	313	1.0	1.0	6.1	43.8	48.2	4.37	.728
Always offer jobs to NDTS graduates	313	1.0	0.0	7.0	46.0	46.0	4.36	.698
Recommend NDTS implementation to other companies	313	1.3	.6	8.6	45.7	43.8	4.30	.759

Table 13.0 A summary of Mean score of the NDTS Graduates’ perception towards the NDTS programme

Descriptive Statistics – Recognition								
Items measured from the Perception of Employees	N	Percentage of scale (%)					Mean score	Standard Deviation
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree		
Support the continuation of the implementation of NDTS program	370	.5	.5	4.6	43.0	51.4	4.44	.661
Recommend NDTS program to friends	369	.5	1.1	4.6	41.7	52.0	4.44	.685
Expect to always get job offers from this company	370	.5	.5	9.5	50.5	38.9	4.27	.696

The findings showed that most employers will continue to implement the NDTS and provide job offers to the graduates based on a high mean score average (Table 12.0). Meanwhile, most of the employees also supported the implementation of NDTS and agreed that they would recommend their friends to join the programme (Table 13.0).

Table 14.0: Percentage of Employers’ Response of recognition of the NDTS program and NDTS graduates based on scale of perception

Items	Percentage scale (%)		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Continue the implementation of NDTS	1.9	6.1	92.0
Always offer jobs to NDTS graduates	1.0	7.0	92.0
Recommend NDTS implementation to other companies	1.9	8.6	89.5

Based on the analysis according to scale of perception, it was established that 92.0% of the employers had positive perception to continue with the implementation of NDTS and offer jobs to NDTS graduates. The findings is consistent with the results from the mean score analysis (Table 14.0).

Table 15.0: Percentage of response on the recognition towards the programme according to the perception of NDTS employees

Item	Percentage scale (%)		
	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Support the continuation of the implementation of NDTS program	1.1	4.6	94.3
Recommend NDTS program to friends	1.6	4.6	93.8
Expect to always get job offers from this company	1.1	9.5	89.5

The analysis on the employees’ response on their recognition of the NDTS programme also showed a consistency with the mean score. 94.3% of NDTS graduates had a positive perception towards the implementation of the programme. Only 1.6 employees provided a negative perception in recommending the programme to their friends (Table 15.0).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Duration in Securing Employment**

The findings determined that 93.6% of the NDTs graduates managed to secure employment in less than six months after they completed their training. These findings showed that the results were better than the findings from earlier research (JPK, 2010). The research conducted by JPK headquarters showed that only 62.6% graduates managed to secure employment within six months of graduating. This research discovered that only a minor percentage (6.4%) of the graduates needed to wait more than six months to land their first job. The comparison between this study and previous study (JPK 2010) showed that there was an increase in the ability of NDTs graduates to secure employment within six months of completing their training. This shows that the NDTs graduates were getting better recognition from the industry, especially from the SMEs. The findings were also supported with claims from employers that the demand for NDTs graduates was high, and they were always sought after by the industry.

### **Salary Offer**

The findings established that there was no significant difference between the salary offered by the NDTs workers in the study and the data reported in the earlier study (JPK, 2010), as it involved only a 10% difference for the pay rate of RM1,000 to RM1,500. However, the study pinpointed the fact that 39.8% respondents were getting a salary of below RM1,000, while the previous study reported only 19.8% of workers receiving similar pay. The scenario was due to the difference in the demographic of the respondents in this study, as 68.5% were holders of MSC levels 1 and 2, compared to the previous study where only 46.9% of respondents were holders of MSC 1 and 2.

A comparison was also made on the starting salary and the current salary received, and the analysis found that there was a reduction in the number of respondents receiving salaries below RM1,000 compared to the starting salary received in the earlier study.

The difference in percentage of respondents getting paid below RM1,000 (starting and current) was 26.7%. However, the range of current salary between RM1,000 to more than RM2,500 showed an increase compared to the starting salary they received.

### **Job Offer**

It was discovered that the SME industry made up the most number of companies that hired less than 20 NDTs workers as their workforce. The data revealed that 16 companies (5.1%) had employed more than 100 NDTs graduates, and most of them were huge corporations, like those in the automotive and textile sectors.

## **Perception towards Work Productivity**

The analysis revealed that all sub-constructs related to the NDTS graduates' work productivity received positive responses from the employers. A high percentage of 88.5% claimed that NDTS graduates had achieved the quality as targeted. The responses received showed that they reached targets successfully, especially in providing services as stipulated by clients. The perception was due to the lack of complaints made against them by employers or clients that dealt with them. The findings were supported by a number of statements from employers that were satisfied with their level of productivity, as they felt that their performance was better than non-NDTS workers.

The findings also showed that a number of employers used the employees' productivity as the basis for promotions and salary increments. However, it became a challenge for the companies when their staff with potential received better offers from other companies. Thus, the companies needed to figure out ways to allow the workers to further develop their careers at the same company.

## **Recognition of the Programme and Employees**

Based on the analysis conducted, it was found that both the employers and employees had positive perception towards the program. 92.0% of employers agreed to continue implementing the NDTS as they felt that the impact was encouraging. 92.0% of the employers also agreed to continue offering jobs to NDTS graduates. This shows that NDTS graduates were well received by employers and had received the recognition and trust from the industry. However, there were also employers who had problems in getting apprentices for their company's due to a lack of information on the programme. Therefore, we would like to recommend that DSD initiate the move to assist employers in getting new apprentices, to ensure that there is no shortage in the supply of skilled workers for the industry.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the study determined that NDTS workers could be marketed well in the job market and were well received by most sectors, especially the industry. This is based on the positive perception of employers towards their productivity, work quality, and recognition of the program and NDTS graduates. Since DSD upgraded various aspects of the programme especially by introducing modules on social skills and social values, the recognition towards NDTS graduates by the industry and employers had markedly improved. However, in the aspect of pay scale, it was found that there was no difference between the salary received by MSC and NDTS graduates, as the employers hired staff based on their skill level, not on the scale of experience and competency. Hence, it is hoped that policy makers could investigate this matter and improve the pay scale of the NDTS graduates, according to their qualification and work experience.

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