

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

Career Motivation & Work-Career Proactivity: Keys to Enhance Graduate Employability

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Anissa Lestari Kadiyono, Rezki Ashriyana, Nur Amalia Pinuji: Career Motivation & Work-Career Proactivity: Keys to Enhance Graduate Employability -- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(9). ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Graduate Employability; Career Motivation; Work - Career Proactivity; Fresh Graduates; Higher Education Institution

ABSTRACT

Readiness to work is a transitional phase from college to work, which is commonly referred to as employability. Employability is a particular form of active adaptation that allows individuals to adapt their work and career environment. Graduates are mostly prepared to enter the workforce. However, in reality, they have not been able to get a steady job, undergoing unideal transition phase, and still feel the need for higher capabilities in order to be employed. The data indicated the need to further research regarding employability of fresh graduates that have recently entered the workforce. The purpose of this study is to describe employability of fresh graduates and describe each dimension of employability. This study conducted to 206 people who graduated from university as the higher education institution. This study used non-quantitative experimental design with a descriptive method. Data retrieval was carried out through the modification of dispositional measure of employability. The result showed that fresh graduates had average category of employability. This indicates that fresh graduates tend to be adaptive in a workplace which is characterized by being reasonably open to new changes and experiences, having fairly positive judgments and views, and gathering information related to the work environment. However, they have to improve their motivation to work and their capability

to clearly define their self's identity in the work environment in order that they can be more proactive to reach their work and career goals.

1. Introduction

The number of unemployment in Indonesia is increasing from year to year, particularly college graduates. According to data from Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of unemployed university graduates, specifically bachelor's degree, has increased significantly. Unemployment rate of university graduates increased from 5.34% to 6.22%. International Labor Organization in Indonesia shows that the rate of unemployed young people is 5.97 times higher than those over 25 years of age, and more than 55% of the unemployed are those who are under 25 years old. These two data lead to a conclusion that university graduates who are unemployed under the age of 25 years are recent graduate degree holders or commonly called fresh graduates.

International Labor Organization revealed that the main cause of unemployment is that job vacancies in Indonesia are occupied by ineligible workers. The data obtained from the Ministry of Manpower Employment Service Center shows that unemployment in Indonesia is partly due to skill incompatibility between registered job seekers and registered employees (Khairuzzaman, 2016). The employability of graduates depends on individual factors, the labour market and organizational practices. Individual factors refer to the graduate's proactive attitude and behaviours with respect to the desired career opportunities (Yusof & Jamaluddin, 2017). Many bachelor's graduates each year are unable to meet the employability standards desired by the existing companies. There is a gap between the abilities of college graduates and the needs of industrial work fields. The increasing number of graduates also adds to the burden because they are not absorbed in the world of work, resulting in unemployment. In the disrupted economy, employment no longer necessarily means winning or keeping for the long term a traditional, full-time position in a company, organisation, small business or institution (Oliver, 2015). Anything student choose to work, it takes employability in graduates to face this. Employability means readiness to face the world of work either as an employee in a company or running one's own business as an entrepreneur. Despite these extensive developments and evidence of innovative practices to increase employability within universities, employability still remains to be a complex and problematic area without much clarity or complete direction (Rae, 2007; Yusof & Jamaluddin, 2017). In one of the earliest studies "Robbins report on employability" commissioned by UK government, employability was identified as one of the four main objectives of higher education (Robbins, 1963; Sumanasiri, Yajid, & Khatibi, 2015).

Psychologically, unemployed people might feel depressed, desperate, and useless because they cannot provide the best for their families and environments that will ultimately affect their behavior in everyday life. This

psychological effect often has a domino effect in which unemployed people socially will feel "insecure" because of the unclear social status that will ultimately lead to stress (Putrama, 2007).

In addition, it turns out that many fresh graduates are sought after by various companies, this is reported in job search sites such as jobstreet.com and linked.in. According to research from many companies, the potential market targeted is in the age range of 17-24 years which they have graduated from universities. This is what makes the company seek for employees who are fresh graduate whose age is not much different from the target market. Fresh graduates are bachelor's graduates who have just successfully completed their undergraduate studies in the last one to two years and have never worked or have only little work experience. Therefore, a college graduate is required to be ready to face the world of work. A person's unpreparedness at work can greatly affect success in carrying out the work in order that it can be maximized (Ward Valerie G, Riddle, Ward, & Riddle, 2005).

College has an increasingly important role in developing and improving the readiness of its graduates (Qenani, MacDougall, & Sexton, 2014). Work readiness is a transition from college to work which refers to employability. Employability is a particular form of active adaptation that allows individuals to adapt to their work and career environment (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004). Graduate employability have several aims relate to short-term graduate outcomes, professional readiness, and living-working productively and meaningfully across the lifespan (Bennett, Richardson, & MacKinnon, 2015).

College graduates are expected to have high employability in order to face industrial competition 4.0. This is in line with the focus of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda which is a prolonged agenda until 2030 that is currently being adopted by all countries registered as the members of the United Nations. The SDGs agenda related to this study is agenda number 8, namely Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive which is still at the stage of requiring much progress needed to increase job opportunities, especially for the young workforce. Increasingly, individual graduates are no longer constrained by the old corporate structures that may have traditionally limited their occupational agility. Instead, they now have greater potential to accumulate a much more extensive portfolio of skills and experiences that they can trade-off at different phases of their career cycle (Arthur and Sullivan, 2006; Tomlinson, 2012).

Based on preliminary research, graduates from university have felt prepared to face the world of work. However, in reality, they have not been able to get a job, have a transitional period that is not yet ideal, and still feel the need for their ability to be more likely employed. These data indicate the need to examine employability of college graduates who have recently entered the workforce.

The research was conducted in West Java, which is the most densely populated province in Indonesia. The result of the study describes the general conditions of the employability of young workers from universities in Indonesia. The impact of employability on the job search period is that the individuals will be

proactive and use various abilities, knowledge, and skills to identify work that suits them. Employability becomes important to be studied in individuals who are on the job search period, because employability can help individuals successfully choose a job that matches their interests and abilities. When individuals have low employability, they will find it difficult to get a job and be productive in the chosen job. Individuals will also consider the world of work as something that threatens them (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007). Therefore, the researcher is interested to examine further the employability of fresh graduates.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term employability was first used by Beveridge, 1909; (Sanders & De Grip, 2004) to distinguish those who could be employed. The concept was then developed to be the ability to find work that suits the needs of the company to quickly make changes (Sanders & De Grip, 2004). Many studies focus employability on individual characteristics ((Fugate et al., 2004); Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; Rothwell & Arnold, 2005; Mansour & Dean, 2016) such as knowledge, work attitude, and prospective worker's way of searching for job opportunities. Employability is about the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (eg. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work (Rothwell & Rothwell, 2017).

Employability according to (Fugate et al., 2004) is a particular form of active adaptation that allows workers to adapt to their work and career environment. Employability facilitates workers to identify and recognize career opportunities which facilitate movement of their work both within and between organizations. It is then concluded that employability is an individual characteristic that encourages positive behavior and adaptive behavior.

There are two approaches of employability, namely objective and subjective approaches. In this study, researchers chose an objective approach of employability because it will better measure the ability of individuals in identifying career opportunities. In addition, the employability referred to in this study is employability in a transition setting to enter the world of work, regardless of whether the individuals have already had a job or have not had a job yet. Researchers would like to examine employability of individuals who are on the job search period.

Employability (Fugate et al., 2004) is a person-centred construct, meaning this construct focuses on personal traits or characteristics. Therefore, the underlying dimensions of employability are also personal. There are five dimensions that represent employability, namely openness changes to work, work and career resilience, work and career proactivity, career motivation, and work identity. These five dimensions, as figure 1 shown, reflect employability and have their own functions and stand independently, however they are combined to form

the concept of employability. The synergistic combination of these dimensions elevates and rewards employability.

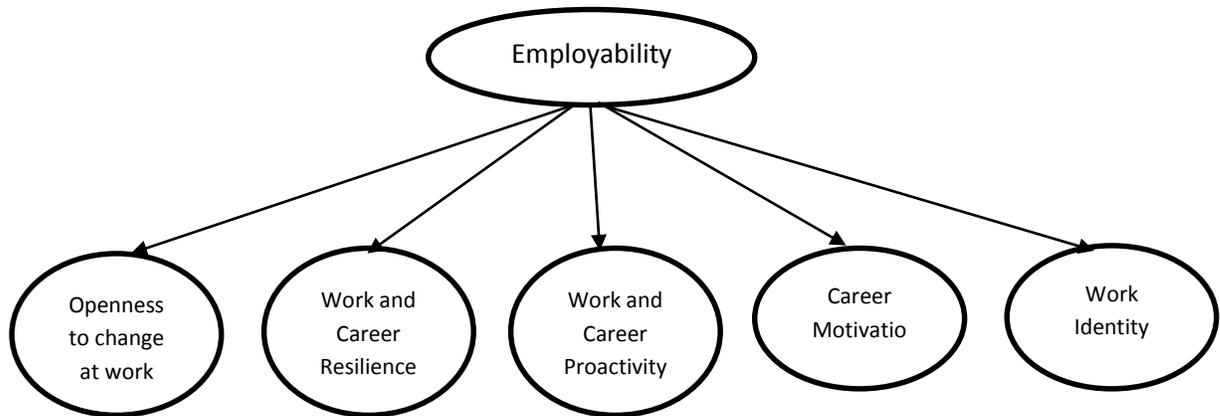


Figure 1. Employability Dimensions – Fugate & Kinicky (2008)

Openness changes to work is the openness of individuals to new changes and experiences in the workforce that supports continuous learning and gives people a chance to identify and recognize employment opportunities. Work and career resilience measures a positive individuals' judgment and outlook on aspects of their work life. Next dimension, work and career proactivity, sees how individuals actively collect information related to career interests in order that they will be more adaptive. Career motivation measures if the individuals have had motivation to pursue their career. Career motivation is built on the concept of motivation control and goal-oriented learning. Finally, work identity dimension is individuals' personal definition in terms of their career. This dimension measures if the individuals are able to define themselves based on their work.

The Higher Education Standards Framework requires all higher education providers to show how all Course Learning Outcomes (discipline knowledge and skills, generic skills, skills required for employment and further study, and skills in independent and critical thinking suitable for life-long learning) to assure students have employability. Judging standards primarily on collated summative marks and grades presents challenges: such codes do not always signal achievement of those capabilities that professional employment requires (Oliver, 2015).

The shift in Higher Education's strategic focus from the development of higher order skills, intellect and mastery of disciplinary content to skilled and vocational readiness is challenged (Pegg et al., 2012) in (Jackson, 2016) yet employability remains a broad strategic priority and continues to influence Higher Education policy and curriculum reform.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research design used was quantitative non-experimental with descriptive method. In this study, researchers used purposive sampling which is one of non-probability sampling methods due to unknown population number. In order to obtain the required number of samples, researchers determined the minimum sample size of 100 respondents as required for the path analysis. The hypothesis test used was 95% confidence level and 5% or 0.05 significance level (α). Based on purpose of this study, the type of data used was quantitative. Quantitative data is data expressed in the form of numbers and is the result of calculation and measurement. The data source used in this study was primary data obtained from questionnaire that was distributed to fresh graduates in West Java Province. Data was obtained through a questionnaire from an adaptation of dispositional measure of employability (DME) from Fugate & Kinicky (2008), totalling 33 items with reliability of 0,928 (high reliability). Response options to each item ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The data was analyzed using the mean of scales calculated. The sample participated in this study was 206 fresh graduates (male = 109, female = 97) with age range of 20 to 27 years old.

4. RESULTS

The research data obtained showed that fresh graduates had average category of employability, as seen in table 1.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Employability

	Mean	SD	Category
Employability	2.83	0.36	Average
Openness to Changes at Work	3.27	0.56	Average
Work and Career Proactivity	2.19	0.52	Low
Career Motivation	2.05	0.42	Low
Work and Career Resilience	3.37	0.44	Average
Work Identity	3.26	0.56	Average

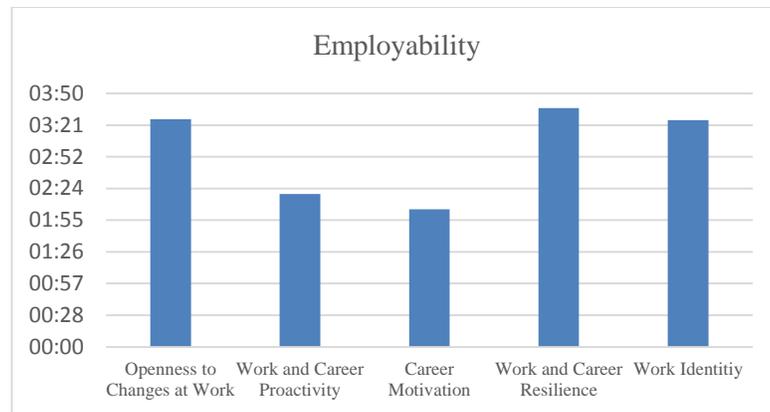


Figure 2. Employability Dimension

Based on the table 1 and figure 2 above, fresh graduates had an average employability. Employability is a combination of all five dimensions. The dimension with the highest mean was work and career resilience, meaning that fresh graduates had positive assessments and views on aspects of their work life. The second dimension was openness to changes at work, meaning that fresh graduates were quite open to new changes and experiences in the world of work. The next dimensions sequentially were work identity, and work and career proactivity. They were not completely proactive in pursuing career, therefore they lacked direction to improve their career and work achievement. The fifth dimension was career motivation, where the mean was lower than the other four dimensions. This indicates that fresh graduates tend to have low career motivation. By motivation means motivation oriented to the goals or targets to be achieved in a career. Fresh graduates in this study already had targets to achieve, however the targets were not specific yet. According to Fugate & Kinicky (2008), if individuals already have a specific plan to achieve their career goals, they will be more motivated to achieve the goals, therefore they will likely to have high motivation. This is the main cause that results in the average category of employability of college graduates.

Further study of openness to changes to work illustrated that college graduates had a tendency to be open to changes and new experiences. This means keeping their selves up to date with external factors that affect employment, such as politics, salary increase, and organizational climate change. In addition, that means being open to changes in the work environment, to changes in positions, functions, and colleagues, following changes in the company's administration system, accepting new rules from management or government policies, and, in terms of job search process, being able to accept that recruitment process in companies might be different, and, finally, being able to accept qualification changes determined by each company.

In terms of work and career resilience, data showed that college graduates had positive assessments and views on aspects of their work life. Further data illustrates additional data regarding what have been prepared by graduates, as seen in Figure 3.

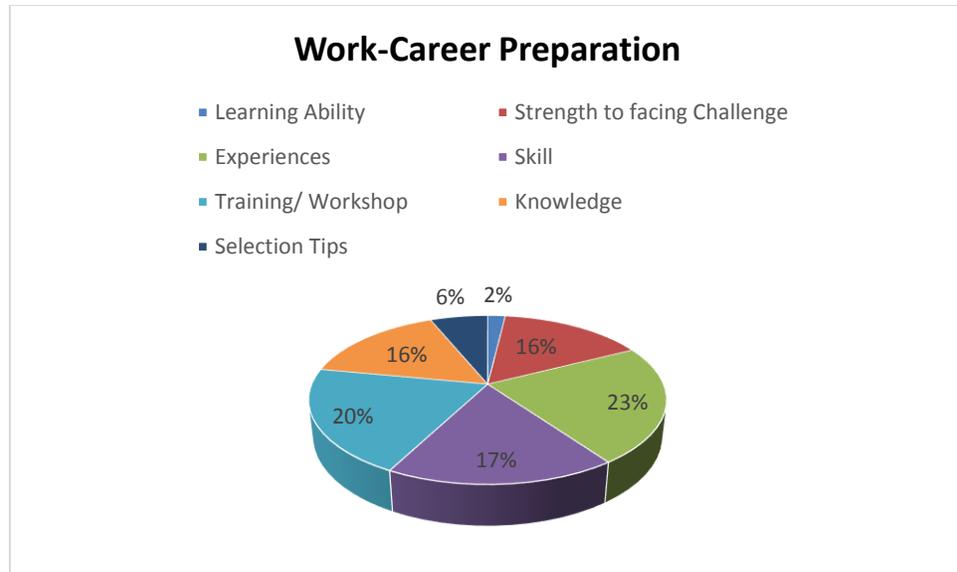


Figure 3. Work-Career Preparation

Data in Figure 3 showed that 22.6% graduates had prepared experiences to face the world of work. By experiences means experiences participating in an organization and work experiences during college. A total of 20.2% fresh graduates had attended various trainings or workshops that supported their work, such as attending psychological assessment training, statistical training, public speaking training, training in geology, and so on. In addition, 17.6% fresh graduates had prepared skills that supported their work, both hard skills and soft skills, in order that they could be well employed in the company. A total of 15.8% fresh graduates had also prepared knowledge that supported their work, such as knowledge of the selected company profile, knowledge of law, geological insight, and so on. A total of 15.6% fresh graduates had mentally prepared themselves to enter the world of work, they also had practiced to be successful when going through job selection process, such as practicing to do job interview, how to write better CVs, practicing to speak English fluently, and so on. Finally, 1.8% had prepared themselves to keep learning new things if they were already working in the future.

The finding relate with the fact that First-year students are concerned with developing their “student identity”, while final-year students are more focused on negotiating their “graduate and professional identity” (Jollands, 2015), that’s why students open about world of work and start preparing their work identity. In terms of Work Identity, it showed that graduates were quite able to define their career clearly. College graduates were able to tell their profile, such as who they were, in the context of the world of work as a supporting data for work identity. Employability strategies that include a focus on individual development can align with identity development through self-authorship (see Barber, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2013; Bennett & Hennekam, 2018a for self-authorship within the workforce; Bennett & Male, 2017 for self-authorship amongst undergraduate engineers in (Bennett et al., 2015)). The rationale for exploring students’ individual, socio-cultural and professional identities within

a social constructivist frame is that as students “(re)conceptualise their strengths, interests and goals” in relation to self and career, there is a corresponding increase in career curiosity, student engagement, the capacity for creativity and problem solving, increased learner agency, and motivation to learn (Bennett et al., 2015). However, the profile was not yet specific. Supporting data in this study can be seen in table 2 regarding work identity of college graduates.

Table 2. Graduate Work Identity

Work Identity	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD	p- value
Clear	97	47,1	3,24	0,38	0,092
Unclear	109	52,9	3,18	0,40	

Based on the figure above, 52.9% graduates had not been able to define themselves clearly. This indicates that they are not completely confident about their chosen career direction and 47.1% other graduates were quite able to define themselves clearly. The mean value of graduates with clear work identity was greater than those with unclear work identity. This indicates that graduates with clear work identity tend to have higher employability, while graduates with unclear work identity tend to be below average of the overall sample and have relatively low employability. They described their work identity as “I am a well-adapted person to a new environment” which indicates a lack of direction. Meanwhile, graduates with higher employability described a clearer work identity, such as “I am an editor who always wants to innovate and make things useful for others”.

However, work-career proactivity still requires improvement. College graduates still lack information gathering about job vacancies, job description of positions in companies, recruitment process in companies, how to improve their skills, what must be done to improve career, and so on. Graduates who have recently worked tend to accept anything ordered or stated in their job description without finding out more about what they can do to improve their career performance and job implementation. The varied lists of employability attributes have been amalgamated into eight dimensions as ‘basic literacy and numeracy skills, critical thinking skills, leadership skills, management skills, interpersonal skills, information technology (IT) skills, systems thinking skills, and work ethics’ (Rosenberg, Heimler and Morote 2012; Shivoro, Shalyefu, & Kadhila, 2017). Enhancing these attributes will make their employability develop.

Career motivation also has to be improved. This motivation referred to motivation oriented towards graduates’ goals or career targets. Motivation was highlighted in all case studies as fundamental to proactive, driven and self-regulating graduates. Such an approach to learning augured well for the development of employability capabilities and professional success (Ferns, Dawson, & Howitt, 2019). Efforts to set short, medium, and long term goals

such as "In 2-3 years, I am sure which HR sub-field I want to focus on.", "I want to become a senior geologist with expertise in a particular field.", "I want to get high salary.", and "Yes, becoming a manager/ team leader at a multinational company." are things that need to be developed in college graduates. After being able to set goals, it requires the ability to translate it into more specific and measurable achievements in order to be able to improve its direction in achieving the goals.

It is important that every student is guaranteed an environment (both within and outside the institution's environment) that is physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling. For students to learn well and develop employability skills, there is need for provision of an enabling environment such as well-equipped libraries and laboratories, internet supply, access to career services, and open probation from company will help to improve their employability (Pitan, 2016).

Employability, according to Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth (2004), is a personal characteristic that encourages the emergence of adaptive behavior. Therefore, researchers also conducted comparative test on employability based on personal characteristics of respondents in this study, as seen in table 2. Gender, faculty taken, and employment status, showed significant employability differences. As for the age, job type, organizational experience, internship experience, and training experience, showed significant differences in employability. Another finding from this research is employability of fresh graduates aged 20-21 years old was higher than aged 22-24 years old and over 24 years old. This result is because the majority of respondents in this study were at the age of 19-24 years old. If linked with the stage of career development according to Super (1990), the age range goes into exploration stage, where individuals are excited to try various career alternatives in order to be open to the world of work. Meanwhile, fresh graduates aged over 24 years old had employability scores lower than the age of 19-24 years old. This is because the age range is when individuals should have been in the stage of establishment, which means they already have a mature career choice and no longer in the adaptation process of job search.

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation, t-value/chi square/F of personal characteristic influence on employability

Personal Characteristic		Mean	SD	t /chi square / F	sig
Gender	Male	3,27	0,36	1.824	0,070
	Female	3,18	0,39		
Faculty of agricultural	Psychology	3,15	0,37	6.201	0,102
	Geological	3,31	0,36		
	Engineering				
	Law	3.26	0,40		
	Technology	3,13	0,35		

	industry				
Age	20-21	3,34	0,36	6.449	0,039*
	22-24	3,24	0,37		
	>24	3,05	0,41		
Employment Status	Yes	3,26	0,39	1.122	0,263
	No	3,20	0,37		
Job Type	Company	3,23	0,38	2.074	0,040*
	Entrepreneur	3,46	0,41		
Organizational Experience	None	3,15	0,39	4.203	0,007*
	1-2 organizations	3,20	0,38		
	3-4 organizations	3,42	0,31		
	>4 organizations	3,40	0,32		
	>4 organizations	3,40	0,32		
Internship Experience	None	3,14	0,37	4.148	0,008*
	1x	3,27	0,37		
	2x	3,47	0,44		
	>2x	3,74	0,24		
Training Experience	None	3,20	0,37	11.463	0,009*
	1-2x	3,22	0,37		
	3-4x	3,54	0,39		
	>4x	3,79	0,23		

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

Another finding in this study was fresh entrepreneurship graduates had higher employability than fresh graduates who worked in a company. Based on organizational experience, the result obtained was that there was significant difference. Students who were active in the organization had its own distinctness compared to those who never participated in an organization. Some advantages in participating in an organization are they will have many social relations, broader insights, they will be more active in communicating, and there will be a lot of knowledge that can be gained from an organization. Participating in an organization will surely resulted in new hard skills or soft skills. These skills can later be brought up until they have graduated to help them adapt in the world of work. However, this study also revealed that when individuals participated in too many organizations, namely more than 4 organizations, their employability were lower than individuals with only 3-4 organization experiences. This might be because when there are too many activities to be participated in, the individuals are unable to manage time well between studying, participating in the organization, training, and so forth.

As seen in table 3, graduates who had attended training more than four times were more adaptive in facing the world of work. In addition, the comparative test result on the training experience showed significant differences. This is in

accordance with the research of Bassanini (2006) who stated that training programs have helped improve the overall employment skills of workers, significantly increasing their chances of recovering income. The result revealed that the more number of training experience, the higher the employability. Experience will help to develop self-awareness such as interests, values, motivations, abilities etc. Experiences also develop Opportunity awareness, which is knowing what work opportunities exist and what requirements they have. Decision learning and transition learning (e.g. job search and self-presentation skills, such as application from completion, curriculum vitae preparation and interview techniques) (Pool, 2017).

Based on Table 3, employability of fresh graduates with more than two internship experiences were higher than those with only two internship experience and those with no internship experience at all. Comparative test result on the number of work experience showed a significant difference. This is in accordance with a research by Surokim in 2016 which stated that work experience will affect one's employability. Based on the result of the study, the more internship experience, the higher the employability. Those three experiences can influence physiology of individual development in preparing to face the workforce. Experience is a knowledge or skill that is known and controlled by an individual as a result of action or work done for a certain period of time. The results of this study lead to a conclusion that higher education institution has an influence in enhancing employability. The strategy set that emerged with the strongest support were internships, placements and work experience.

Furthermore, the university experience must be broad-based and far-reaching; students in the 21st century must be encouraged to do more than study in order to prepare for graduate employability (Kinash & Crane, 2015). The focus should be on transferability of skills across contexts and disciplines, and proactive, entrepreneurial, innovative individuals who are capable of managing their own careers through creating, constructing, designing, and identifying employment opportunities, rather than training for a particular profession (e.g., Benneworth, 2016; McMahan et al., 2003; Trede & McEwen, 2016; Rowe & Zegwaard, 2017). University must develop their curricula and courses offered in the universities should be revamped from time to time to reflect the wider skills and attributes necessary for employment in the modern economy. Industry players can be roped in to be part of the academic team so that students can get first-hand information and be kept abreast about the industry and the job market (Ang, 2015). Thus, universities need to commit to professional learning opportunities for lecturers to develop their skills and confidence in relation to career management learning. Students can learn from career management learning and the resulting development of sustainable employability can have long-term benefits for students, universities and employers ((Bennett et al., 2015). Universities and enterprises should collaborating to enhance graduate employability: that is the need of industry for prospective employees to be work- ready in specific disciplines. Enterprises are now under pressure to increase productivity in a competitive global market.

Moreover, with an exuberant pool of skilled workers (as a result of mass Higher Education), employers have become more selective in their choice, and their requirement for work experience often appears unreasonable for recent graduates (Tran, 2016). Assessment can be done to measure graduate employability. Students highly concerned about developing employability skills, but not many students appear to perceive their career planning. Employability assessment may be a primary means by which they can develop these capacities based on their report (Kinash, McGillivray, & Crane, 2018). Therefore, higher education institution plays an important role in developing its graduates to be more employable.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that fresh graduates have average category of employability. They tend to have low work - career proactivity and low career motivation. In other words, their employability are not yet optimal. An overview of employability in fresh graduates based on comparative test on job type, age, organizational experience, internship experience, and training experience, shows significant differences. Fresh graduates who are doing entrepreneurship have higher employability than those who are working in a company. Internship, organization, and training experiences during college also enhance graduate employability. Higher education institutions are suggested to take into consideration that younger graduates have higher employability. This is because they are open to the possibility of higher career development. This will certainly provide feedback on the pattern of education in higher education institutions in order to increase self-confidence and develop better resilience or ability to rise from failure in students. In turn, the educational process carried out will enhance their employability to the optimal level.

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