

THE GRADUATES' PERCEPTION TOWARDS PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS REQUIREMENT IN JOB SEEKING PROCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

Personal quality is generally needed in the companies such as the spirit of work, ambition, and ability to take challenges. Previous studies also assert that various companies had evaluated in different way towards the characteristics of personal quality. The purpose of this research is to identify the quality of the personal characteristics required by the company for university graduates. Besides that, this research also measures by evaluating the graduates (job seekers)' quality of the personal ability that they have obtained from the learning process in universities, and to see the graduates' perception of the importance of personal abilities against job search process. Respondents in this research were graduates of various higher education institutions in East Java which were looking for job vacancies. Data collection was done using questionnaire distributed to the respondents of about 346 graduates. Sampling technique used was convenient sampling method. Utilizing of this research, higher education institution can the personal qualification required by the company and the students' perception conduct the evaluation of process and methods of learning in relation to the building of the graduate's personal qualification and minimize the gap between on their personal qualification. The results are expected to have some implications for HEIs.

Key words: personal characteristic, personal quality, job seeker, higher education institution

INTRODUCTION

Competition in the Higher Education Institution (HEI) to get a "place in society" is make higher education institutions creative and "different" in all things. This can start from crawling from the prospective new students, process of teaching and learning activities, and efforts to curtail the waiting period to get a job.

Parameters of a HLEI can not be measured only with the quantity of students who are studying in university. In the context of the wider quality, universities can be measured by how far the out put or the graduates are able to compete in the job seeking arena. The competition itself is very tight, because the number of graduates is not the same as the availability of job opening. Due to this, it is required to optimize the role of HEI to distribute the graduates in various

employment opportunities, working together with others: the users.

Competencies are as important as one's qualification has gained acceptance in both business and academia (Berman, 2006).

Some companies believe that the more important factor to consider the requirements is the loyalty of the employees rather than the specific or technical skills and education (Nguyen, 2005). The fact, employee with only the education and professionals training can not be too satisfying for the company. However, many companies are considering the education and skills as a requirement, with other requirements such as prospective employees should be the graduates of universities. Based on the arguments above, the prospective employees should have competency, loyalty, and the graduates of university.

Personal characteristics as soft skills, are also referred to as "micro social" skills, and are universally recognized as being critical to being successful to do the job. The increasingly interpersonal characteristic in the workplace has been widely discussed. According to Peter Drucker (1994 in Muir 2004), the effective knowledge worker is working in teams, multitasks, and is a critical and creative thinker, worker must adapt well to social and operational contexts. Personal characteristics are the essential tools for helping graduates contribute to their full potential. Interpersonal characteristics are fundamentally inherent in promoting soft skill development. Higher education can play an important role in helping graduates to demonstrate aptitude at social as well as technical skills (Muir, 2004). Thus, besides the three factors (competency, loyalty, education), employees should have personal characteristics such as working in team, as the soft skill.

The efforts to facilitate the preparation of work for the graduates should be performed by educational institutions, companies and employment agencies by working together to develop job awareness for candidates and employees' opportunity to improve the implementation of the internship (Nguyen, 2005). Cooperation and mutual exchange of information with education and training institutions, companies and organization as other users is important. The importance is how to find solutions about employment problems. There are some important issues about employment currently. When the important issues can be met simultaneously, the problem can be solved. These are the qualities of human resources which are related to the quality of education, the employment, and real economic activity.

One of the keywords to solve the employment problem is to improve the quality of competitiveness through education-oriented quality, access, equity and autonomy. It means the system of higher education must be of high quality, ensuring access for all prospective students and have a

quality of autonomy that can guarantee the activity of academic quality and efficiency.

In addition, the need for higher education to develop the quality of the graduates' personal characteristics in relation to the abilities, skills, and attitudes needed in work, in a way to design a career education programs in order to bring a change of the labor competitiveness. Related to the above, the purpose of this research is to identify the quality of the personal characteristics required by the company for university graduates. Besides that, this research also measures by evaluating the graduates (job seekers)' quality of the personal ability that they have obtained from the learning process in universities, and to see the graduates' perception of the importance of personal abilities against job search process. More explicitly, they are stated as the following: (1) Explore and examine in depth the personal characteristics of the job seekers as a result of the graduates from higher education institutions in East Java; (2) Examine the gap of differences between the personal characteristics needed by the company and the personal characteristics that have been owned and perceived by the graduates (job seekers); (3) Prove that there is a significant relationship between the quality of the personal characteristics that have been perceived by the graduates (job seekers) and graduates' satisfaction; (4) Prove that there is a significant relationship between the graduates' evaluation on the work opportunity for them with the level of the quality of the personal characteristics that have been perceived by graduates (job seekers)

Based on the description above, the problems in this research can be formulated as follows:

1. Which one of these personal characteristics of job seekers is important?
2. How is the quality of the graduates' personal characteristics as a result of the learning process in high education?
3. How is the difference between the personal characteristics needed by the

- company and the personal characteristics that job seekers have perceived?
4. How is job seekers' satisfaction of learning programs that have been received from the higher education associated with the personal characteristics?
 5. How does job seeker evaluate the work opportunity to them?
 6. How to design the learning programs that can minimize the gap between the needs of the company's personal characteristics and quality of personal characteristics that have been owned by the job seekers

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Previous Studies

Kajiharas' research (in Nguyen, 2005) concluded that there are twenty two qualities of personnel needed by the various companies in Japan. The quality is the same, in general, as needed by the various companies, such as the spirit of work, ambition, and ability to face the challenges (power to struggle). The research also concluded that the manufacturers and companies think that communication skills, responsibility/intention in the work are the most important requirements. Financial companies place the quality of personal responsibility and entrepreneurial thinking as a major requirement. Trade and services companies require the ability of being flexible as important factor, while engine designers consider independence and creativity as the requirements for the job seekers. In addition, multinational companies consider that the graduates who have specialized in certain areas are more important.

A detailed, personal characteristics are as follows spirit, responsibility, communication skills, goal setting, entrepreneurial spirit, ambition, initiative, endurance, flexibility, creativity, optimism, sensitivity, individuality, sincerity, leadership skills, presentation skills, willingness to face the challenges, problem-solving skills, visioning. Based on some research, the capabilities needed by the company from the

university graduates are divided into 2 groups: (1) Group 1: Knowledge of the specialist include and qualifications of academic; (2) Group 2: Personal quality of which include: personal skills, attitudes and personal characteristics.

In personal skills, there are eight cases such as the communication skills, presentation skills, computer skills and IT problem-solving skills, leadership skills, visioning thinking, skill, goal setting, and self-assessment skills. Quality of personal attitude characterized the presence of responsibility, optimism, curiosity, ambition, desire the challenge, teamwork and spirit. Personal characteristics are categorized in several ways, the initiative, sensitivity, flexibility, individuality, honesty, creativity, the personality of equilibrium, entrepreneurial thinking. According to Berman (2006), student personal characteristics refer to intelligence and personality

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This research is a descriptive research in nature and the objective is to examine the relationship of the research variables. When it is viewed from the crystallization perspective of this research, it's formal research due to the objective formulated obviously (Cooper and Schundler, 2001). It can also be considered survey research category because the main data are gathered by means of questionnaires. Thus, the job seeker are given questionnaires for expressing their perception about personal characteristic as a requirement of job seeking activity and perception about how their personal characteristic of themselves are.

Sample Selection and Data Collection

The study will be performed by means of survey method and the population is the job seekers involved in job fair program at STIE Perbanas Surabaya. The sample is taken by convenience, involving 346 participants. Actually, 500 questionnaires were distributed to the job seekers, but only 346 (69.2%) were

Table 1 Required Characteristics of Graduates

No	Characteristics	No	Characteristics
1	Teamwork	18	Autonomy
2	Initiative	19	Honesty
3	Presentation skill	20	Creativity
4	Computer skill	21	Risk taking
5	Problem solving	22	Entrepreneur thinking
6	leadership	23	Discipline
7	Visionary thinking	24	Communication
8	Goal setting	25	Self-confidence
9	Self evaluation	26	Achievement
10	responsibility	27	Empathy
11	optimism	28	Relationship
12	curiosity	29	Negotiation
13	ambition	30	Self awareness
14	Desire the challenge	31	Handling conflict
15	spirit	32	Systematic
16	sensitivity	33	Adaptation
17	flexibility		

analyzed due to some consideration that some didn't fill the questionnaires completely. They were then grouped into the following: state universities (122 respondents) and private universities (214 respondents). This consists of 139 males (40.2%) and 206 females (59.5%).

Research Variables

The employed variables in this research are: personal characteristic including thirty three characteristics as in Table 1:

Measures

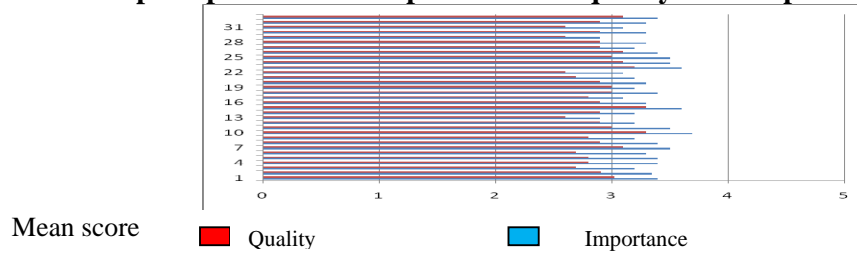
The questionnaire method was chosen because of its ease of utilization. The respondents were asked to choose the rate of a five-point Likert type scale to indicate their perception about how important each of personal characteristic would be for their future employment and their evaluation of their own capabilities in each personal characteristic quality. The choice response of "1" indicates the least important and "5" the most important. In evaluating their own capability for each personal characteristic quality, "1" indicates the lowest quality and "5" the highest quality. In addition, they were asked to answer the open questions about the satisfaction

toward their study, sources of their personal characteristic quality and job opportunities.

RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the mean scores of respondents' perception about the importance and quality of their characteristics. In comparing the score of the importance and quality perceived by the respondents, it is revealed that the graduates were likely to evaluate their own quality of personal characteristic lower than they rated the importance of all these characteristics. For this result, it was apparent that the graduates recognized that all the personal characteristics at least "important", and it means that they need to develop the personal characteristic to compete in job selection process. This result also shows that graduates evaluated visionary thinking, responsibility, optimism, spirit, discipline, communication skills, and self confidence as being more important than other characteristics. The gap between 'importance' and 'quality' of problem solving skills and leadership skills are higher than other characteristics. All of the gap between 'importance' and 'quality' were significant.

Figure1:
Graduates' perceptions of the importance and quality of their personal characteristics



The graduates of the private university rated 'the importance' of all characteristics and they are not significantly different from the state universities. For 'quality' of their personal characteristic, the graduates of the state universities evaluated all characteristics more highly than the graduates of private universities.

The research result revealed that the personal characteristics of the graduates are perceived important by them, including all of thirty three characteristics. There is significant relationship between the importance of personal characteristics and the quality level owned by the graduates (correlation: 0.351, sig. (2-tailed): 0.00).

The data analysis revealed that the quality of graduates' personal characteristics is as a result of the learning process in high education. There is significantly effect of the learning process towards the graduates' personal characteristic quality (beta: 0.11, t: 2.01, sig. 0.04 = $p < 0.05$)

There are significant differences between the personal characteristics needed by the company and personal characteristics that have been owned by the graduates. Thirty two characteristics are significant and only the responsibility characteristic which is not significantly different for the personal characteristics needed by the company and personal characteristic that has been owned by the graduates.

Another result, there is a significant relationship between the graduates' satisfaction about learning process and personal characteristics quality. The result also explains there is a significant relationship between the graduates' evaluation on the work opportunity to their

qualification to the level of the gap needed by the company and qualifications that have been owned by graduates (job seekers) perception

The respondents evaluated that the most important sources from which they learned how to develop their personal characteristic quality were parent and family members (83.3 percent of respondents); working experience (5.4 percent); friends (4.0 percent); lecturer (2.5 percent); school counselor (0.6 percent) and others (4.2 percent). The results revealed that traditional sources "parent and family members" had most impact on graduates personal characteristic qualities.

Graduates also were confident that they would achieve employment. 45.4 percent of the total respondent were very confident, and 49.6 percent were confident.

Respondents also to give qualitative responses about their own ideas about desirable teaching process and to design the learning programs that can minimize the gap between the needs of the company's personal characteristics and quality of respondents' personal characteristics. The qualitative responses can be categorized into main themes as follows; more practical, student centered not teacher centered, used group discussion and presentation method.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND LIMITATIONS

It can be concluded that all the personal characteristics at least "important", and it means that they need to develop the personal

characteristic to compete in job selection process.

This result also shows that graduates evaluated visionary thinking, responsibility, optimism, spirit, discipline, communication skills, and self confidence as being more important than another characteristic personal. There are significant differences between the personal characteristics needed by the company and personal characteristic has been owned by graduates.

Although this study has contributed to the understanding of the importance and the qualities of graduates' personal characteristic, there was several limitations of the study. One of limitation was a convenience sample. The generalization in this research can be limited to East Java university students. By extension, these results are restricted to this particular university. The graduates in this study only represent a sub sample of all participants on the job seeking program. Another limitation is that quality of personal characteristic was measured by self-report rather than actual assessment and this may have influenced the pattern of the results.

The major findings of this study are such as the graduates were likely to evaluate their own quality of personal characteristic lower than they rated the importance of all personal characteristics; the graduates of the private universities rated qualities of all characteristic and this shows significant difference compared to the state universities. Such improvement should be focused on using team teaching to support in dealing with the students, integrating job requirement and employable personal characteristic qualities into the academic curriculum. Another recommendation is empowering and improving the program and performance of university career centers.

So far, the number of the graduate of higher education has been unequal to the capacity of the job opening. From the previous Perbanas Job Fair and Campus Hiring, it shows that most job opening area is marketing (PCC, 2008). Such a condition is the challenge as well as the primary key

thing to be tackled by higher education to maximize their role in channeling the graduates in job market. This can be done by bridging them with some companies and by adapting to job market's demand. Besides that, they should provide the students with various training and other value added e.g., personal character development or soft skill.

In the future, the graduates are expected not only to be employed in job matching area with enthusiasm and optimism, but also to do the tasks needed by the market demand. They are also requested to have positive job attitude, so they can do a better performance. The career centers serve the graduates in term of career advice and counseling, creating the job preparation program or windows of work. The study also has important practical implications such as how personal characteristics can be improved. Designing and operating in the learning methods to improve the quality of personal characteristics is also important to do.

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