



STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON INDUSTRIAL TRAINING: A CASE STUDY AT UNIVERSITY OF VOCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

University of Vocational Technology (UoVT) is the only institution that offers the highest or degree level (level 7) courses of the National Vocational Qualification Framework of Sri Lanka (NVQFSL) (TVEC, 2005) and (UoVT, 2008). Fifteen different Bachelor of Technology degrees are offered by the university. Degree courses are offered as weekday courses and weekend courses. Weekend courses have been designed for NVQ level 5 or 6 qualified employed students, and are operated from Saturday to Sunday. Weekday courses are operated from Monday to Friday, and are opened for advance level qualified students as well (UoVT, 2019). For both modes of operation, common semester-end examinations are conducted.

For all weekend B. Tech. degree programmes, fifth semester is a six month work based training, aimed at a student's work place related training. For weekday degree programmes, fifth semester is a six month industrial training (UoVT, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e) during which students are trained in subject related industrial organisations

Industrial training additionally supports the students to fulfil the competencies needed for future employments as well. On the other hand, employers are able to choose more suitable students as employees in their industries, since the students train with them for six months' duration (UoVT, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e).

However, since many industries are reluctant to absorb trainees in their work places, and also due to a higher number of students from several institutions seeking industrial training simultaneously, limited number of training opportunities are available for students to choose. In certain occasions, certain students are not in a position to find a training place by the time of commencement of training. Therefore, in such cases, the students have to join whatever the training place, they come across initially.

There are certain views found in literature with regard to industrial training. One study carried out by Tanius (2015) says similar nature of contribution from both parties, university and employers is an essential factor in enhancing students' employability skills and opportunities. Industrial training contributes to better academic performance of students, according to Rosemary (2015) and also Megat and Ismail (2015). As with Osman (2016), knowledge and experience gained by students during industrial training would be a guidance when scheduling for a better future career.

A study carried out by Anyaeneh and Chinedu (2019) suggests that there should be serious monitoring of both industrial supervisors and students to get the real outcome of industrial training.

Based on a study, the suggestion made by Derrick (1970) is for relevant authorities to frequently visit the factory floors, since there is a chance for students' opinion on training to be declined after their exposure to the training environment. According to another study conducted by a Sri Lankan, Galagedera (1986), to strengthen the cooperation in between the university and industry, interaction made by the university staff needed to be increased. Suggested appropriate strategies include factory visits, industrial researches, consultancies, laboratory assistance to industry, guest lectures etc. The study done by Karunaratne and Perera (2019) says that both university and industry need to work together to get students' internship programmes succeeded.

Kukreti and Dani (2020) show positive relationships exist between satisfaction of industrial training of hospitality undergraduates' and both, organizational environment and supervisor of institute/university or coordinator of training place.

According to the guidelines, industrial training of UoVT is assessed twice; mid-term assessment and final assessment (UoVT, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e). In both mode of assessments, the average performance of certain students is not admirable. Apart from communication difficulties, technological knowledge gained by certain students is below average. Therefore, a study was designed to find causes of barriers for obtaining industrial training outcomes, and to suggest appropriate strategies for them.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study was undergraduates who were reading for the all weekday degree programmes of the academic year 2016/17 of the UoVT. The population size was 130 undergraduates, and the target sample was selected using simple random sampling technique covering all fields of the degree courses.

The data were collected through a structured questionnaire. Twelve questions belonging to two main areas were addressed; issues with training place and personal problems. The questionnaire was distributed among 100 students of the above intake, whereas only 35 of them responded.

Descriptive statistics were used for the analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences software was used with 5 point Likert scale (5 - strongly agree to 1- strongly disagree). Answers marked for 5 and 4 were treated as acceptances while 2 and 1 were treated as disagreements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Summary of the findings are given in the following figures.

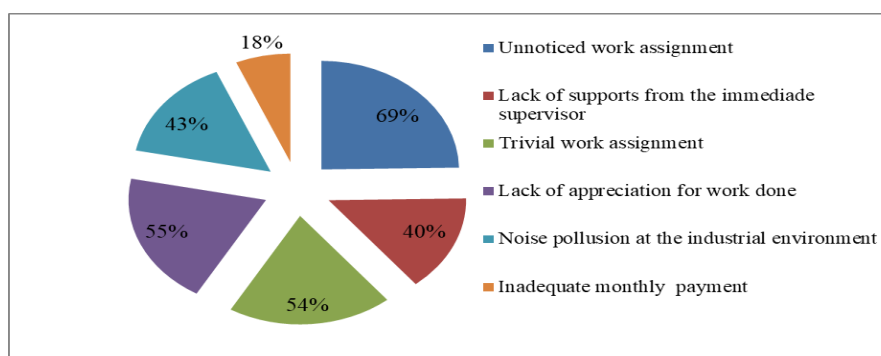


Figure 1. Students' training place related issues with their percentages of feedback

Figure 1 indicates the training place related issues with their percentages of feedback. Unnoticed work assignment (69% feedback) seems to be the main concern among all of the issues related to training place, while insufficient appreciation for the performance (55% of feedback) and trivial work assignment (54% feedback) are at considerable levels. Other than considering students' point of view, substantial proportion of training providers used to get their work done by the trainee students. In such instances, students have to attend whatever and whenever the tasks assigned to them, whether such tasks are important for students' training or not. When industry's work is assigned to the trainees, students are being paid. This is the reason for not appreciating the students for their work, in most of the cases. However, according to certain students, payment made for them for their work is not sufficient either (17% feedback).

With new experience in industry, certain students find uneasiness with factory sounds (43% feedback), though they are unavoidable. Another concern with students is the unsupportive supervisor (40% feedback). Immediate supervisor is the person who needs to make almost all

sorts of assignments/communications with the trainee students. In occasions when the supervisor doesn't support the students, students really are helpless; it is hard to fulfil the objectives of industrial training as well.

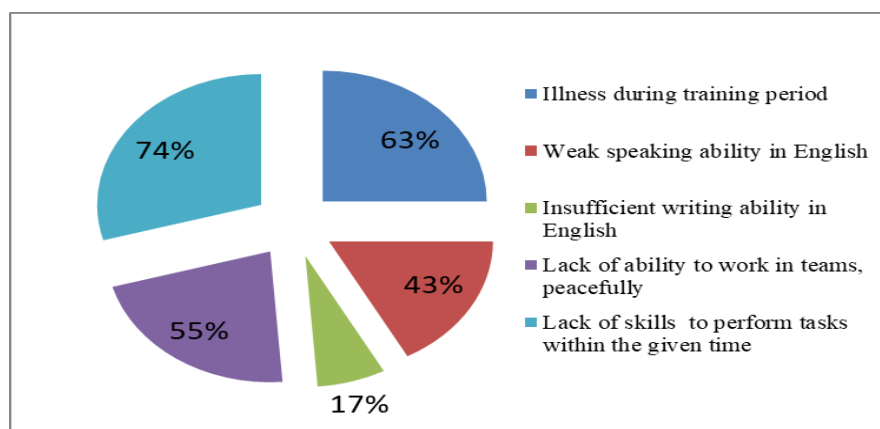


Figure 2. Students' personal problems with their percentages of feedback

As the figure 2 indicates, students' major personal problem during industrial training is the failure to manage time (74% of feedback). Performing the given tasks in a short period is a problem for some students, in contrast to the somewhat flexible classroom tasks. Illnesses during training (63% feedback) is the second most significant personal problem. Exposure to new tough industrial environmental conditions sometimes caused illnesses of certain students, mainly due to being away from enjoyable life at the university. An average student's third most significant personal problem is the difficulty to work in teams (55% feedback). Certain students used to work independently, and when a group work is assigned to them, they are weak in respecting others' ideas.

Weak speaking skills (43% feedback) is another noticed issue during training. The students don't feel writing as a main problem during training, since main tasks assigned to them by the training provider are practical tasks using different tools and machineries. Students usually don't need to attend multiple writing tasks within the training place other than maintaining the daily diary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Industrial training is the component of the all Bachelor of Technology degree curricular that gives the highest employment skills for the students. In this regard, supporting students to get the highest outcome of industrial training is an unavoidable requirement. Previous researches (Tanius, 2015, Derrick, 1970) highlight the requirement of intervention of training providers and relevant industries in fulfilling the achievement of required industrial training and development of practical competencies of students. Therefore, it is recommended to establish a supervisory training division within the university and devote mechanisms to guide the applicable authorities to fulfil the expectations of industrial training. Revising the degree curricular suitably is also an essential requirement, so that the students may improve soft skills, required for their future career also.

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