

The Role of Governmental Training Program in Increasing Youth Employability Rate: Evidence from Kazakhstan

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Introduction

In conditions of a world competitive economy it is important for university and college graduates to meet demands of a labor market. Therefore, one of the key missions of higher education institutions is not only to bring up good citizens of country, but also to develop the employability competence of students¹. However, at the same time providing skills for labor market is a challenging task for universities worldwide. After graduation students often have theoretical knowledge which they cannot use in practice²³⁴.

In order to address this problem the government of Kazakhstan launched the state on-job-training program "Youth practice". It is an unusual program as, first, unlike training programs in higher education institutions, it is designed not for students but for graduates of colleges and universities, secondly, it is totally financed by the government. It means that trainees and trainers of "Youth Practice" get salaries from the state budget. The duration of the program is six-months. The "Youth Practice" is aimed to provide university and college graduates with training program at different organizations, giving them opportunity to get practical skills at the workplace; as well to establish networking with employers and assist graduates of the program to find the first full-time job.

"Youth practice" program has been working for several years. However, due to lack of research on analyzing how the "Youth Practice" actually works, it is not clear how university graduates (trainees) benefit from this program, and what the employers feel about the program.

The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore how the state on-job-training program "Youth Practice" helps students graduated from universities to get practical skills and then find the first fulltime job. The research question that guided this study is: What is the role of the state training program "Youth practice" in assisting university graduates to find the first fulltime job? In order to answer the overarching research question I addressed the following two sub-questions: 1) How does "Youth practice" is organized to assist graduates (trainees) to get job? 2) What kinds of challenges do trainees and trainers usually face during the implementation of the program?

In the next section I will review literature on benefits and challenges of on-job-training for trainees and trainers.

Literature Review

Benefits of On-Job-Training for Trainees and Employers

On-job-training programs are beneficial for trainees and employers. On-job-training helps prepare students for the labor market in the following way: 1. it enables trainees to shift from

¹ Verney, Thomas P., Stephen J. Holoviak, and Anthony S. Winter. "Enhancing the reliability of internship evaluations." *The Journal of Applied Business and Economics* 9, no. 1 (2009): 22.

² King, J. "Companies use interns as hiring pools." *Computerworld* 31, no. 7 (1997): 63

³ Khir, Kamal. "Training employable graduates: Innovation in training methodology." In *National Conference on Continuing Technical Education & Training*, pp. 34-52. 2006.

⁴ Singh, Gurvinder Kaur Gurcharan, and Sharan Kaur Garib Singh. "Malaysian graduates' employability skills." *UNITAR e-Journal* 4, no. 1 (2008): 15-45.

academia to work; 2. it gives them opportunity to realize their strengths and weaknesses, as well as set up interests; 3. it makes trainees be familiar with career-centered option; 4. it helps trainees choose future career; 5. it provides trainees with opportunity to enhance potential employment opportunities⁵⁶⁷. For employers, on-job-training is helpful to hire skilled workers, and save expenditures on recruiting⁸⁹

Challenges in On-Job-Training

The literature, in general, is somewhat limited in addressing challenges of different stakeholders in trainees. Mostly, literature covers challenges of trainees such as lack of challenging jobs, poor mentorship, and poor organization of on-job-training programs¹⁰¹¹¹²¹³ Gorman, Moore, Blake, & Phillips¹⁴, as well as Jacobs¹⁵ classify this challenges as unstructured on-job-training programs. The scholars argue that structured on-job-training differs from unstructured in the way that trainees are trained by company worker who has experience and expertise in training. Training in structured on-job training is organized at workplace or place that represents the real work setting. Moreover, as Jacobs & Jones¹⁶ suggest, structured on-job-training has, first, plan that identifies objectives, goals, and activities related to the training field. Second, trainers are trained in instructional and content delivery methods. Third, trainers work in the same company where on-job-training is organized and use products and facilities of that company. Fourth, trainers deliver on-job-training at the workplace using the same instruments used by trainees. Finally, trainers have valid and reliable certification. In contrast to structured on-job-training, unstructured training is delivered by a company employee who has limited expertise and experience in training. Moreover, training usually has lack of tasks related to actual work of trainee.

Thus, it becomes obvious that the qualification of trainer is the corner stone in the structure of effective trainees. In order to organize effective on-job-training Blanchard and Thacker¹⁷ suggest trainers have enough expertise and competency in training and work field, be highly

⁵ Blanchard, P. Nick. *Effective Training, Systems, Strategies, and Practices, 4/e*. Pearson Education India, 1999.

⁶ Collins, Ayşe Baş. "Gateway to the real world, industrial training: Dilemmas and problems." *Tourism management* 23, no. 1 (2002): 93-96.

⁷ Smith, Erica, Paul Comyn, Ros Brennan Kemmis, and Andy Smith. "Australian employers' adoption of traineeships." *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 63, no. 3 (2011): 363-375.

⁸ Hurst, Jessica L., and Linda K. Good. "A 20-year evolution of internships: Implications for retail interns, employers and educators." *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* 20, no. 1 (2010): 175-186.

⁹ See note 7 above

¹⁰ Angle, Harold L., and Marian B. Lawson, "Organizational commitment and employees' performance ratings: Both type of commitment and type of performance count," *Psychological Reports* 75, no. 3 (1994):1539-1551.

¹¹ Becker, Thomas E., Robert S. Billings, Daniel M. Eveleth, and Nicole L. Gilbert, "Foci and bases of employee commitment: Implications for job performance," *Academy of Management Journal* 39, no. 2 (1996): 464-482.

¹² Meyer, John P., and Natalie J. Allen. "Links between work experiences and organizational commitment during the first year of employment: A longitudinal analysis." *Journal of occupational psychology* 61, no. 3 (1988): 195-209.

¹³ Meyer, John P., Natalie J. Allen, and Ian R. Gellatly. "Affective and continuance commitment to the organization: Evaluation of measures and analysis of concurrent and time-lagged relations." *Journal of applied psychology* 75, no. 6 (1990): 710.

¹⁴ Gorman, Phil, Richard Moore, Daniel Blake, and Michael G. Phillips. "An empirical study of the effectiveness of publicly-funded 'structured on-site training': implications for policy and practice." *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 56, no. 3 (2004): 387-408.

¹⁵ Jacobs, Ronald. *Structured on-the-job training: Unleashing employee expertise in the workplace*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003.

¹⁶ See note 15 above

¹⁷ See note 5 above

motivated to train and have enough time apart from their own work. Moreover, as Moore¹⁸ argue, trainers should design activities for trainees relevant to their work.

Despite the fact that issues of trainees are widely discussed in literature, there is lack of studies addressing challenges of trainers of on-job-training programs. Moreover, the experience of on-job-training in developing countries is also limited. Thus, this study that analyzes one training program in the context of Kazakhstan and covers the needs of both actors of training process (trainees and trainers) fills the gap in existing literature on on-job-training.

In order to understand the focus of this study, in the next section I will provide information about Kazakhstani state on-job-training program Youth Practice

Context of the Study

“Youth Practice” as the Example of State-Funded On-Job-Training Program

The state program “Youth Practice” has been implemented in Kazakhstan since 2004 by the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development of Kazakhstan (the MHSD). Since 2004 till 2013 the “Youth Practice” in the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana, had prepared 4584 trainees.

The goal of “Youth Practice” is to provide universities and colleges graduates with the first work experience in their field. Duration of on-job-training is six months. The program is state-funded. The salary of trainees is fixed and constitutes \$75 per month. However, employers who hold on-job-training in their companies can pay additional salaries. The number and the list of vacancies where trainees can have on-job-training is formed by the MHSD.

According to the rules of the program, the candidates who want to apply for “Youth Practice”, as trainees, have to match the following criteria: 1) they should have diplomas which certifies that they graduated from university or college; 2) they should have no work experience on specialty they have got in university or college; 3) they should be graduates of no more than 12 months ago; and 4) they must be residents of the region where on-job-training is provided.

After enrollment to the Youth Practice program, trainees choose the organization where they want to have on-job-training from the list of companies provided by the MHSD. Then administrators of “Youth Practice” organize interviews for trainees with employers. If an employer decides to take a candidate, administrators sign contract with that employer and candidate, and after that on-job-training starts. After the completion of “Youth Practice” some portion of trainees may get the job in the organization where they have had training. On-job-training is recorded in employment history of trainees.

Trainers of Youth Practice on-job-training are employers working in companies of Kazakhstan and providing vacancies for trainees. As administrators of “Youth Practice” report, there are no special criteria for trainers-employers to become holders of on-job-training. The employers can be representatives of both, state and private, organizations. In 2015 in the list of the MHSD there were 80 companies providing on-job-training in their organizations with 491 vacancies.

Despite the fact the Youth Practice on-job-training has been implemented in Kazakhstan since 2004, there is lack of studies on analyzing the role of this program for both trainees and employers.

To understand the central phenomenon, I employed variety of instruments that are explained in the next section.

Methodology

¹⁸ Moore, Richard W. *Training that works: Lessons from California's employment training panel program*. WE Upjohn Institute, 2003.

In this qualitative study I employed 22 individual interviews, one focus group interview and document analysis as instrument.

I conducted individual interviews with 22 participants: two program administrator, 10 employers and trainees who graduated from the program in 2013. Interview questions with administrators of the program, were about the program design, role of the program, and the process of implementation of the program from the administrators' perspective. Interviews with employers covered the experience of the participants as trainees, methodology they use during the traineeship program and expectations from the program from the employers' perspective. The questions of the interviews with trainees were related to the participants' learning experience, challenges, general assessment, and outcomes of the program from the trainees' perspective.

In order to achieve triangulation, in addition to individual interviews, I conducted focus group with five current "Youth Practice" trainees. The participants were asked questions related to their previous experience and knowledge they got during their study at universities, reasons for participating in the program, current experience during participation in the program, and future expectations from the program. I also used document analysis as the instrument. I closely reviewed a primary source which is the official document - the passport of the State Program "Youth Practice". It helped me to examine the goals of the program, the design of the program and also to understand how this program is implemented.

Findings and Discussion

Benefits of "Youth Practice" for Trainees and Employers

Benefits of "Youth Practice" for Trainees.

As the study results show, the state program "Youth Practice" is beneficial for trainees as it helps them to gain valuable practical experience, in some cases find jobs and make better career choice.

There is stigma that in Kazakhstan it is difficult to find job without corruption. In this case nepotism and cronyism are usually considered as main tools to be hired, especially for beginners with lack of work experience. Youth Practice on-job-training gives trainees a chance to be hired avoiding corruption providing wide and free access for trainees to the job market. Once trainees get into real work place, they become able to develop future employment opportunities. As Hurst and Good¹⁹ conclude, on-job-training can be assumed as the strongest point in the CV of a trainee and can be the most important part in securing a job. On the other hand, "Youth Practice", according to participants, is a good instrument to establish networking for future carrier.

Another benefit of on-job-training is that it provides trainees with the opportunity to check the relevance of their skills and knowledge in real conditions. Thus, when employer gives the task to trainees, they can realistically evaluate own strengths and weakness. As a consequence, trainees can make wise decision about career choice.

The study showed that the employers from different companies that take trainees from the "Youth Practice" also benefit from program. First, they can assess the work of trainees and hire strong ones among them. More specifically, the employers can evaluate and decide to what extent trainees' skills they gained during the program are useful for their organization²⁰

Benefits of "Youth Practice" for Employers

¹⁹ See note 8 above

²⁰ See note 8 above

The “Youth Practice” is beneficial for employers from the economic point of view. Recruiting experienced specialists requires a lot of investments from companies, and, therefore hiring a trainee in the USA is cheaper than hiring a worker with good resume by more than half^{21,22}. In Kazakhstan, the trainees of the “Youth Practice” get subsidies from the state budget, and therefore the potential employers do not need to pay salaries to trainees. Their job is to provide trainees with practical work experience. Thus, by getting trainees and using their services for free employers can save money.

However, as the study showed there is no prohibition of any organization also to pay salary to the trainees. Dilemma related to the payment of trainees’ salary, has been widely analyzed in international literature. For instance, Hurst and Good²³ suggest that employers need to pay if they want to hire employees of good quality. Moreover, Ryan²⁴ argues that if good trainees, who believe in own knowledge and skills, have the choice between paid and unpaid on-job-training in their major, they will definitely choose paid on-job-training. However, Hurst and Good claim that trainees who struggle for limited number of vacancies will not pay attention to payment system. They explain this argument, saying “in these fields, trainees are more motivated by the opportunity to be noticed and/or stand out amongst their peers in an effort to be more competitive in the job market”²⁵. It means that the main goal for that category of trainees is employment. However, as the results of this study show, additional salaries for Youth Practice trainees are usually paid by private companies, whereas public organizations are not able to do that due to budget restrictions.

Challenges of Youth Practice for Trainees and Employers.

Challenges of Youth Practice for Trainees.

As findings show there are four main challenges trainees meet during the program: lack of challenging job, lack of mentorship and supervising, low employability rate at companies where trainees have on-job-trainings, and low salaries.

The first issue of “Youth Practice” trainees is a lack of challenging jobs. During on-job-training employers do not assign serious tasks for trainees. As some of trainees report, the main job they did was office work, such as making copies, scanning and writing letters. The consequences of such unstructured on-job-training were covered in literature. For instance, Meyer and Allen²⁶ claimed that if trainees got more administrative work, it made them think that they would not gain real work experience, and thus, would not grow professionally. Additionally, trainees by getting “easy” work to do feel less important and belonged to organization. As a consequence, organization becomes less attractive for trainees to work in future. In the case with “Youth Practice” lack of challenged job leads to drop outs of trainees. According to administrators of the program, many trainees dropped Youth Practice because of the tasks that were not relevant to their major.

However, the fact that assigning clerical work usually happens in the beginning of on-job-training program, might also have a positive impact on trainees’ development. Many Kazakhstani universities due to lack of finance cannot afford buying modern technology. In this

²¹ See note 8 above

²² Ryan, J.T. (2007). Companies raise bar, improve recruitment with paid internships. *Central Penn Business Journal*, March 23. Retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa5295/is_200703/ai_n21233979/

²³ See note 8 above

²⁴ See note 22 above

²⁵ See note 8 above, p.182

²⁶ See note 12 above

case doing administrative work can also lead to gaining new practical skills. Nevertheless, literature suggests employers giving trainees task aimed to professional development²⁷.

The second challenge of trainees is lack of mentorship. As some of trainees of "Youth Practice" claimed, they did not have mentors from both administrators of the program and employers side. According to the responds of trainees, during the program administrators of "Youth Practice" did not call trainees or visit them in order to be aware of how on-job-training was going on. It means that administrators did not monitor the quality of implementing the program. They did not get any feedback from trainees. Collins²⁸ calls this case as "unstructured" on-job-training. According to the author, one of the assets of poor organized on-job-training is lack of monitoring. In this case, universities and employers should sign a special contract, where the role of universities, but in case with "Youth Practice" role of administrators of the program, as supervisors should be emphasized. It means that coordinators of Youth Practice have to monitor and assess the organization's performance in providing on-job-training programs. If organization does not meet the requirements of both administrators of the program and trainees, trainees should be placed in another organization. Moreover, administrators of "Youth Practice" should explain trainees what they and employers expect from trainees as well as to provide criteria for successful competing of the on-job-training.

As for mentorship from organization, the role of mentor is to provide trainee with information about company, to assist in work, as well as to provide feedback²⁹. In this study, according to some respondents, they had to have on-job-training programs with mentors who were not competent in the field. As one of the trainees reported, his trainer was not professional lawyer. He could not be a good mentor due to lack of knowledge in that sphere. In order to learn the work of lawyer the trainee had to ask help from his university instructors. This case echoes in works of Jacobs³⁰, as well as Moore³¹, who claimed that within unstructured training trainees were trained by company staff who had limited expertise and experience in training. As the result, the work they assigned for trainees was not relevant to actual needs of trainees as future employees.

However, in the case of "Youth Practice" lack of mentorship or specialists who can train trainee at the workplace leads to that fact that trainee becomes more independent. Trainee looks for additional information and improves problem solving skills which are important features of good specialist. Additionally, the absence of specialists at work means that trainee has more chance to be employed. This fact is not fixed in literature but was confirmed by the answers of some respondents, that after the completing "Youth Practice" on-job-training program they were employed because their effort of "self-training" was highly valued and appreciated by employers.

This case shows that the role of "Youth Practice" mentorship is underestimated by both trainers and administrators of on-job-training program. According to the literature, lack of mentors' support for trainees in the workplace can lead to negative consequences. For instance, without mentor's support trainees feel emotionally exhausted and being excluded from the team. Additionally, due to lack of support of organizations, trainees become unconfident and, as a consequence, they are not able to apply their knowledge properly.

²⁷ Henry, Janice S., Susan S. Rehwaldt, and George M. Vineyard. "Congruency between student interns and worksite supervisors regarding critical elements of an internship experience." *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal* 19, no. 1 (2001): 31.

²⁸ See note 6 above

²⁹ Iverson, Roderick D., Mara Olekalns, and Peter J. Erwin. "Affectivity, organizational stressors, and absenteeism: A causal model of burnout and its consequences." *Journal of Vocational behavior* 52, no. 1 (1998): 1-23.

³⁰ See note 15 above

³¹ See note 18 above

The issues of trainees such as a lack of challenging jobs and poor mentorship characterize "Youth Practice" as unstructured on-job-training program³². In order to improve the organizational structure of on-job-training, Tracy and Tews³³ suggest to follow the following steps: 1) to assess the needs of trainees; 2) to use "appropriate training methods to deliver content based on needs"; 3) to evaluate systematically criteria and strategies of the program. On the other hand, employers should provide trainees with support of mentors, while mentors should provide trainee with clear job description, pointing out the rights and responsibilities of trainee and employer. According to Collins³⁴, mostly trainees in the USA come to the workplace being not familiar with their responsibilities. Additionally, as Rothman³⁵ suggests, trainees usually do not understand what employers want trainee to accomplish. The situation is the same in "Youth Practice". According to responses of trainees, most of them did not get professional guideline from employers how to deal with given tasks. Organizations should provide a professional orientation to enable trainees to know more about employers' expectations, as well as to clarify what trainees have to expect from a company, and give trainees task which should be aimed to professional development³⁶.

The third challenge of trainees is low employability rate at companies where trainees have on-job-trainings. As the findings show only 5-6% of trainees are usually employed by the same organization. It happens due to lack of vacancies in companies where trainees have on-job-training. The question is, why administrators of the "Youth Practice, trying to increase employment rate, send trainees to companies where there are no vacancies?" From my perspective, in order to increase the employment rate of trainees at organizations where they are placed to have on-job-training, administrators of "Youth Practice" should send trainees to the organizations that need employees and have enough vacancies. Trainees should not be used as free labor force³⁷.

The fourth challenge is low salary. Despite the fact that literature covers the issues of paid and unpaid on-job-trainings it is not relevant to the Kazakhstani context due to the uniqueness of "Youth Practice". Moreover, there is lack of evidence in literature how the salaries of trainees should be calculated. According to majority of trainees, \$75 is not enough to live in big cities. This is a big issue for those trainees who do not have own accommodation but have to pay for rent, as well for those who have families and children. There are two way of increasing salaries. First is to increase salary by allocating more money from the akimat's and republican budget. Second is to stimulate employers to pay additional salaries. Both administrators and employers, by evaluating own capacities, can provide on-job-trainings with transport cards for month. Thus, trainees will not spend money at least for using public transport. Moreover, I think, the government should take into consideration the standards of living in different regions of Kazakhstan and assign salaries for trainees of "Youth Practice" in accordance with those standards. Logically, the salaries in big cities should be higher than in villages or small towns as the life in big cities is more expensive.

Challenges of Youth Practice for Employers

According to the results of this study, the main challenge of employers is trainees' drop outs of trainees. That is unique finding and refers to special status of "Youth Practice", as this program, in comparison with experience of other countries, provide on-job-training for graduates who has

³² See note 15 above

³³ Tracey, J. Bruce, and Michael J. Tews. "Training effectiveness: Accounting for individual characteristics and the work environment." *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* 36, no. 6 (1995): p.37

³⁴ See note 6 above

³⁵ Rothman, Miriam. "Lessons learned: Advice to employers from interns." *Journal of Education for Business* 82, no. 3 (2007): 140-144.

³⁶ Henry, Janice S., Susan S. Rehwaldt, and George M. Vineyard. "Congruency between student interns and worksite supervisors regarding critical elements of an internship experience." *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal* 19, no. 1 (2001): 31.

³⁷ See note 22 above

already got diplomas, while in the USA or UK, for instance, such programs are designed for students as a part of graduation requirements. Students get credits and grades for on-job-training as for academic course³⁸. As a consequence, there is a few number of dropouts in those countries. As for Kazakhstan, employers are not satisfied with that fact that trainees are not obliged to complete “Youth Practice”. Trainees drop the program despite the fact that employers invest a lot of efforts, time and energy providing on-job-training. As the result, employers can refuse from participation in “Youth Practice” in future and it will be more difficult for administrators of the program to attract previous and new employers. Moreover, the government also loses money investing in trainees who then drop the program. It is called as “inefficient use of budget”. It can lead to the fact that the government will not probably allocate more money and thus, the program, can become again less popular.

The first reason of drop outs is extremely low salary that constitutes \$75. The issue with low salaries is crucial especially for trainees who do not have own accommodation or for those who have families. From my perspective, in this case employers do not have to rely only on state subsidies which are aimed to pay salaries for trainees. They should think about stimulation of trainees to work by paying additional salary on behalf of organization. As, Hurst and Good (2010) suggest, if employers want to employ good specialists they should pay. Moreover, money will make trainees accountable for job and employer can assign any tasks for trainee in order to increase the productivity of the work of organization³⁹. Thus, the risk of trainees’ dropouts will be minimized. However, Hurst and Good⁴⁰ emphasize that monetary stimulation does not make sense when trainees are struggling for vacancies which are practically not available for trainees due to high level of competition. In that case trainees are satisfied just with the opportunity to have on-job-trainings and to be noticed by potential employers. In this case, I suggest employers to evaluate own capacities. If they are able to pay salaries, why not to do that? Additional salaries can cover expenditures on transport and food, which are important issues for young trainees.

Conclusion

In this article I discussed to what extent “Youth Practice” is beneficial, and at the same time, challenging for employers and trainees. As findings and evidence from literature show, employers by participating in “Youth Practice” get the opportunity to employ good workers as well as to save money for recruitment of specialists. As for trainees who have on-job-training within “Youth Practice” the program gives a chance to get first work experience in the work field and further to be employed.

However, findings show that both employers and trainees meet challenges during the participation in “Youth Practice”. The main challenges for employers is drop outs of trainees that decreases the number of employers who participate in the program. As a consequence, trainees of “Youth Practice” have limited choice of companies where they would like to have on-job-training program. As for trainees, issues such as lack of challenged job, lack of mentorship and supervising, low employability rate at companies where trainees have on-job-trainings, and low salaries influence trainees’ decision to drop the program. Although the “Youth Practice” is designed to provide trainees with work experience, sometimes they cannot get it because they are not assigned to do a serious work⁴¹. Many trainees dropped the program doing mostly manual, secretarial and administrative tasks. Moreover, there were no responsible people from the “Youth Practice”, such as mentors, who could control the quality of the on-job-training program. Trainees were not controlled by the administrators of the program, did not get feedbacks and guidelines from them and, as the consequence, could not evaluate own progress

³⁸ See note 8 above

³⁹ See note 22 above

⁴⁰ See note 8 above

⁴¹ See note 13 above

at work⁴². Additionally, trainees could not be employed at companies where they had on-job-training program not because they were not “good” candidates but due to the absence of vacancies for them. As the result, the aim of the “Youth Practice” which was to assist trainees to find a job was failed and trainees were used just as a free labor force by employers. Moreover, low salaries given from the state budget also caused drop outs of trainees. All of these factors I described above characterize the “Youth Practice” as unstructured on-job-training program⁴³. This leads to the decrease of the number of the “Youth Practice” participants and to the reduction of the popularity of the program.

The results of the study suggest the MHSB improving the quality of the “Youth Practice” by developing the structure of on-job-trainings. As Jacobs⁴⁴, as well as Moore⁴⁵ suggest, structured on-job-training should have plan with clear goals, methods and training activities related to work. The role of trainer is crucial in delivering programs. Consequently, trainers should have enough expertise in the field and training, and have time for training apart from working hours⁴⁶. Second, administrators and trainers of Youth Practice should pay greater attention to the role of mentor. Mentors should guide trainees, provide information about company, where trainees want to have on-job-training program, assist in work, as well as to provide and ask feedback for trainees. Third, coordinators of Youth Practice should initiate forums and discussion platforms with employers on how to improve the quality of on-job-training. Employers need to be motivated to provide trainees with real employability skills.

The study findings also offer policy implications for the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES). Although it was not the focus of the study, the findings showed that most university graduates do not possess strong employability skills. Thus, the study findings offer MOES with policy implications for revising curriculum development and delivery so that university graduates develop their practical and employability skills while they are already at universities. MOES may also reflect on curriculum development processes and perhaps involve different stakeholders in this process including the perspectives of different employers

The study findings also offer some practical implications for higher education institutions. It seems the universities can cooperate and work closely with employers on curricula design. Employers should participate in the curriculum development process with faculty, and their inputs should be sought so that students are best prepared to meet the requirements of the current job market. Moreover, universities need to establish and maintain fruitful partnerships with organizations where students can have on-job-training programs. University administrators should agree with partners so that to make employability skills development as the priority task at workplace. It is important for universities to monitor and control the quality of on-job-trainings.

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⁴² See note 6 above

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⁴⁵ See note 18 above

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