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Enhancing Employability and Empowerment: Unveiling Factors within PERDA-TECH for Sustainable Development

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Abstract: In the contemporary landscape of education, fostering graduates' employability has emerged as a vital concern for educational institutions and policy makers, particularly within the framework of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) and Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG8). This paper delves into the employability dynamics of graduates from the PERDA-TECH program, a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) initiative operating under the auspices of the Penang Regional Development Authority (PERDA). In the quest for a competitive edge within the workforce, TVET programs hold the promise of cultivating a skilled labor pool that aligns with the workforce demands, thus bolstering economic growth (SDG8). However, a comprehensive analysis of the graduate employability facets is indispensable to address the nuanced requirements of the job market. Existing studies have outlined seven pivotal employability skills, encompassing interpersonal skills, critical thinking, self-improvement, resourcefulness, ICT proficiency, fundamental aptitudes, and information literacy. Additionally, employers place premium emphasis on attributes such as social acumen, management proficiencies, creative thinking, problem-solving capabilities, and critical analysis. Aligned with these imperatives, the PERDA-TECH Malaysia Skills Training Programme seeks to equip graduates with competencies tailored to amplify their employability prospects. Nonetheless, the insights from the PERDA 2020 Outcome Assessment report reveal a gap in the comprehensive understanding of graduate feedback and employability determinants. This study endeavors to bridge this gap by methodically examining the factors influencing graduates' employability within the PERDA-TECH program. Employing a quantitative approach, the study encompassed survey responses from 226 graduates. The findings unveiled a noteworthy 71.3% (162 graduates) employed, 21.2% (48 graduates) pursuing further education, and 7.1% (16 graduates) currently unemployed. Encouragingly, a significant proportion of graduates secure employment within six months of graduation, substantiating the program's efficacy in catering to market needs (SDG8). The factors influencing employability were dissected into three categories: graduate attributes, learning outcomes, and market dynamics. This holistic analysis enhances the alignment of the program's objectives with SDG4's emphasis on quality education and SDG8's pursuit of decent work and economic growth. This study underscores the symbiotic relationship between relevant and skill-centered education, graduates' market readiness, and sustainable economic development. As a result, it contributes not only to the advancement of knowledge but also to the realization of SDG4 and SDG8, enlivening the overarching mission of fostering inclusive education and propelling economic progress.

Keywords: Employability, TVET, graduate skills, PERDA-TECH, sustainable development

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions have long recognized the paramount importance of graduates' employability skills, as they wield a profound impact on graduates' marketability in the workforce. This significance is particularly accentuated among graduates emerging from technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs. TVET stands as an educational paradigm meticulously tailored to swiftly integrate youths into the labour force upon completing their studies. This specialized form of education is adept at equipping students with industry-relevant proficiencies, either to facilitate their entry into specific sectors or to enhance the skill sets of the currently employed workforce (Minghat et al., 2022). Intriguingly, the hegemony of TVET, with its potential to mitigate challenges such as poverty and unemployment, along with the pressing need for diverse skill sets, has pushed it into the limelight, eclipsing the prominence of traditional higher education (Ridzuan & Abd Rahman, 2022). Notably, TVET emerges as a potent arsenal, arming local graduates with the precise, field-specific skills required to effectively navigate the disruptive landscapes of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) and the concomitant technological shifts. Crucially, the employability of TVET graduates resonates as a matter of paramount concern across numerous nations. The essence of TVET programs lies in endowing students with pragmatic proficiencies and knowledge tailored to distinct industries. However, a recurring quandary surfaces as graduates often grapple with the challenge of securing appropriate employment opportunities. Furthermore, the catalytic role of TVET in generating employment prospects and consequently catalysing graduates' careers toward bolstering economic growth is evident (Wafi et al., 2023). The employability of graduates plays a very important role in determining the effectiveness of the TVET education system. Therefore, TVET is crucial in ensuring graduates have the employability skills required by the industry (Noor, 2023).

TVET graduate employability is influenced by various factors, including skills gap where the primary issues are the existence of a skills gap between the skills acquired by TVET graduates and the skills demanded by industries. Rapid technological advancements and changing industry requirements often render the skills learned in TVET programs outdated or insufficient. Employers seek graduates who possess up-to-date technical skills and other competencies such as problem-solving, communication, and teamwork. The next factor is TVET education quality. The availability and quality of practical training and work experience opportunities play a significant role in TVET graduate employability. Hands-on training and internships provide students with real-world exposure, allowing them to develop practical skills,

adaptability, and industry-specific knowledge. Insufficient or inadequate practical training can hinder graduates' ability to meet job requirements and employers' expectations. Industry relevance is another factor affecting TVET graduate employability. The relevance of TVET programs to the needs of industries is crucial, when the curriculum fails to align with industry requirements, graduates may lack the necessary skills and knowledge that employers are seeking. Collaboration between TVET institutions and industry stakeholders can help bridge this gap, ensuring that programs are up-to-date and tailored to industry needs. Addressing these challenges and improving TVET graduate employability requires a multi-faceted approach.

The path to enhancing TVET graduate employability navigates through a complex labyrinth necessitating a multifaceted strategy. Notably, the PERDA-TECH Survey report casts a spotlight on a promising statistic, indicating that 70% of graduates have secured positions within the industry. However, an uncharted domain remains, as no existing studies have probed into the employability factors unique to PERDA-TECH's skills training programs. Consequently, this study emerges as a torchbearer, illuminating the factors interweaving graduates, learning outcomes, and market dynamics that collectively forge graduates' employability. As we unravel the complex structure of employability, this study resonates harmoniously with the ethos of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) - Quality Education and Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG8) - Decent Work and Economic Growth. By forging a symbiotic connection between education and economic progress, this research reinforces the ideals enshrined within SDG4 and SDG8, channelling aspirations toward a sustainable and inclusive future.

2.   Literature Review

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a pivotal role in equipping individuals with essential skills for the socio-economic development of a country, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). This skills-based post-secondary education is vital in addressing the need for a skilled workforce, thereby contributing to the growth of industries and overall economic advancement. Various policies and initiatives have been developed globally, regionally, and nationally to bolster vocational education and skills training, aiming to fulfill the demands of economies and labor markets. At the ASEAN level, countries like Brunei Darussalam have launched the Technical Education Improvement Plan to enhance the outcome-driven measurement of technical education's impact (Ebil et al., 2017). In Cambodia, partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) drives strategies to harness vocational and skills training in the upliftment of impoverished sectors (Daroesman, 2022). Indonesia directs its focus toward TVET enrollment augmentation, vocational school revitalization, and strengthened industry alliances (Triyono & Mateeke Moses, 2019). These initiatives align with the SDG 8, by addressing poverty through skill development and promoting decent work opportunities.

Nations like Laos focus on increasing skilled labour through ADB-supported projects, reflecting their commitment to SDG 4 and SDG 8, which emphasize quality education and economic growth (Phoumilay, 2019). In Myanmar, a metamorphosis from a low-skilled to a high-skilled workforce marks a transformative journey (Tun et al., 2021). The Philippines, on the other hand, orchestrates diverse initiatives under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority to amplify TVET's image and reputation (Budhrani, 2021).

Singapore's pioneering approach includes the establishment of technical and polytechnic institutes, melding theoretical and practical learning (Tan, 2021). In Thailand, the Thai Vocational Education Commission ushers in the apprenticeship program alongside Thailand 4.0 initiatives (Pongoh, 2021). Similarly, Vietnam adopts legislative reforms and collaborative efforts to bolster TVET (Tuan & Cuong, 2019). These global endeavors collectively signify a shared commitment to elevate vocational education and skills training, aligning with the demands of respective economies and labor markets. Nationally, the impetus on skills training is palpable, spearheaded by public and private training centers, the Malaysian Technology Board, transformation through the National Blue Ocean Strategy, and the advancement of vocational schools to colleges (Mustapha & Hussain, 2022) resonate with SDG 8's focus on productive employment and decent work for all. The study by Sharifah Syahirah et al. (2018) examines leadership, policy, and governance, aligning with SDG4 and SDG8 principles. It explores education, leadership, and economic growth, emphasizing the role of informed Gen Y perceptions for effective leadership and sustainable economic development. This fosters educated and empowered youth, contributing to broader sustainable development goals. Awang et al.'s (2016) analysis of racial integration, economic policy, and the 1Malaysia concept complements SDG4 and SDG8 by highlighting the synergy between education, inclusive policies, and sustainable economic growth. The paper emphasizes the need for educational empowerment and social cohesion, aiming for a society where diversity is a source of strength and socioeconomic progress is equitable and enduring. Similarly, Sharifah Syahirah et al. (2015) contributes to sustainable development by highlighting challenges and opportunities for women middle decision-makers underscoring education, and empowermet in decision-making roles. This work drives toward a more equitable and prosperous society through informed policy and increased participation.

With a focus on graduate employability, skill-oriented educational institutions underscore the paramount importance of equipping graduates to match industry demands and contribute to the skilled workforce. Notably, PERDA-TECH graduates exemplify the outcome of such endeavors, as evidenced by their employment readiness, catering to industry needs and fueling economic growth. The significance of individual employability skills surfaces as a potent factor in influencing graduates' employability. These skills encompass interpersonal, thinking, personal, resource, ICT, basic, and

information skills (Permana et al., 2019). Employers, as reflected in past studies (Aliu & Aigbavboa, 2023), prioritize qualities such as social skills, management acumen, creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Graduates are counselled to strike a balance between technical and generic skills to enhance their abilities (Hadiyanto et al., 2021).

The quality of education, meanwhile, emerges as a pivotal factor influencing graduate employability. The efficacy of educational institutions rests upon leadership, curriculum quality, classroom environment, achievement orientation, structured teaching, and recognition of success (Pacia & Guevarra, 2023). Practical teaching should harmonize with student needs and labor market requirements, thereby ensuring seamless pedagogy (Brooks et al., 2021). Emphasizing both theoretical and practical components is paramount to bridging the gap between theory and application (Jafar et al., 2020). The burgeoning demand for skilled labor accentuates the challenge of aligning graduates with the criteria sought by employers (Cheng et al., 2022). Notably, technical and social skills play a pivotal role in enabling graduates to thrive in the job market, fostering career success (Pirzada & Gulzar, 2023). This compels the need for empowerment to enhance employability skills and, by extension, boost the economy. In essence, the development of employability skills becomes an essential for TVET graduates to effectively address contemporary industry needs, warranting a curriculum underscored by technical acumen and marketability skills. Additionally, Awang et al. (2016) study on racial integration and economic policy provides a valuable contribution to the discourse on sustainable development, particularly within the frameworks of SDG4 and SDG8. Their analysis underscores the significance of informed policy decisions that promote both educational equity and economic growth, ultimately striving for a more inclusive and prosperous society.

Furthermore, the emphasis on employability skills, quality education, and practical training align with SDG 4's targets for relevant and effective learning and SDG 8's aim to enhance employability and skills development for sustainable economic growth (United Nations, 2021). The pursuit of these goals emphasizes a holistic approach to education and skills training, catering to both individual growth and societal progress.

3.   Methods

This research presents a case study conducted at PERDA-TECH, employing a mixed-method design that harmoniously integrates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The study focuses on a cohort of 884 graduates who completed their studies at PERDA-TECH over a span of 4 years (2016-2019). The research methodology unfolds in two distinct phases:

3.1   Preliminary Qualitative Data Collection

Initially, qualitative insights were gathered through a meticulously conducted focus group discussion (FGD). This interactive discourse involved four pivotal stakeholder groups: alumni, teaching and administrative staff, parents, and employers. The total respondents partaking in these preliminary discussions numbered 37. The primary intent of this preliminary study was to meticulously shape the formulation of the questionnaire instruments for ensuing quantitative/ qualitative field studies. This strategic step is highlighted by the insights of Malmqvist et al. (2019), emphasizing the essential role of preliminary studies in augmenting research quality across diverse dimensions. The preliminary study participant pool encompassed 6 alumni, 8 administrative staff, 14 teaching staff, 5 parents, and 4 employers. Notably, to ensure unbiasedness, it is important to emphasize that these pilot study respondents were distinct from the actual study sample under investigation. They were drawn from the same population, effectively circumventing any potential bias.

3.2   Quantitative/Qualitative Field Study Data Collection

The subsequent phase encompassed the distribution of survey questionnaires to three crucial stakeholder groups: alumni, employers, and parents. From this collective population, samples were purposefully selected through purposive sampling, a strategy spotlighted by Mweshi and Sakyi (2020), wherein samples are chosen based on traits aligned with the study's objectives. This methodology, consciously chosen to align with research goals, facilitated the identification of samples that best served the study's objectives. The study's representative sample comprised 333 alumni, 248 employers, and 333 parents. Out of this cohort, 226 alumni, 38 employers, and 51 parents provided feedback through the survey.

The study framework is visually articulated in Figure 1, encapsulating the path guiding this research endeavor.
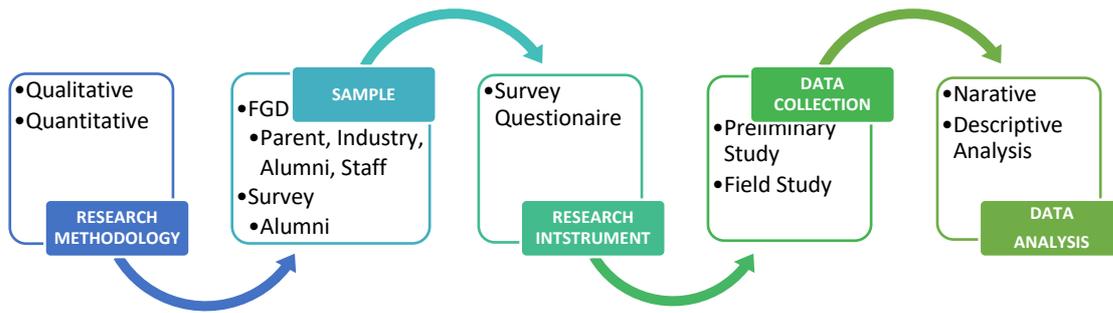
Fig. 1 - Study framework

The data collection process extends over 2 weeks, capturing feedback on graduates' employability and the determinants impacting the employability of PERDA-TECH graduates. In contrast, the comprehensive research endeavor unfolds over a 6-month period. The questionnaire instrument employed integrates a 5-point Likert Scale, catering to both graduates' satisfaction and an employability index. Additionally, the questionnaire also encompasses a qualitative facet, facilitating the collection of feedback from employer and parent respondents. While qualitative data was subjected to narrative analysis, the quantitative data underwent descriptive analysis.

4.   Data Analysis

Between 2016 and 2019, a total of 884 individuals successfully completed their studies at PERDA-TECH, earning certificates and diplomas, subsequently venturing into the job market. Out of this total cohort, a subset of 265 individuals was targeted for participation. Among this targeted group of 265, a commendable response rate of 226 individuals provided their insights through the questionnaire, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1 - Population and samples

Stakeholders	Population	Sampling frame	Sample	Return
Alumni	884	333	265	226
Administration Staff	45	45	45	30
Academic Staff	68	68	68	65
Industry	-	248 (based on working students)	35 (5 people from each program)	38
Parent	884	333	35 (5 people from each program)	51

Table 2 - Rrespondent's profile

Item		Numbers
Numbers Of Respondent		226
Graduation Year	2016	61 (27%)
	2017	49 (21%)
	2018	35 (16%)
	2019	80 (36%)
Study Program	Skills	21 (9%)
	Technology	142 (63%)
	ICT	46 (20%)
	Film & Fashion	17 (8%)
Level Of Education	Certificate	48 (21%)
	Diploma	178 (79%)
Current Status Job	Permanent	116 (51%)
	Temporary	26 (11.5%)
	Self-employed	15 (6.6%)
	Work with family	5 (2.2%)
	Further study	48 (21.2%)
	Jobless	16 (7.1%)

Referencing Table 2 above, insights gathered from a comprehensive survey of 226 PERDA-TECH graduates indicate that 71.3% of the respondents successfully secured employment upon graduating from the institution. Delving into the specifics, a noteworthy 51% of graduates attained permanent employment status, while 11.5% experienced temporary employment. Additionally, 6.6% embarked on the entrepreneurial path, establishing their own businesses, and 2.2% found employment within family-run enterprises. Notably, a portion of graduates, accounting for 21.2%, opted to further

their studies. However, it's important to acknowledge that 7.1% of respondents did not secure employment during the study period.

Table 3 illuminates the timeline within which graduates secured employment post-graduation, categorizing it into five distinct periods: 1-3 months, 4-6 months, 7-9 months, 10-12 months, and more than 1 year. The data reveals that a substantial 58.57% of graduates secured employment within the initial 1-3 months, indicating a swift transition. Correspondingly, 22.86% of graduates attained employment within 4-6 months, while 4.9% found opportunities within 7-9 months. The figures dwindle further with 2.14% securing employment within 10-12 months, and a remaining 12.14% taking over a year to secure employment.

Table 3 - Findings related to the first employment period after graduation

Period	Numbers	Percentage
0-3 months	82	58.57
4-6 months	32	22.86
7-9 months	6	4.29
10-12 months	3	2.14
> 1 year	17	12.14
TOTAL	140	100.00

The study established a significance threshold of 0.7 to discern the pivotal factors affecting graduate employability from the perspective of employers. Findings elucidate several key factors underpinning the employability of graduates. A substantial 0.87 (33) respondents concurred that an intrinsic desire to acquire new knowledge plays a pivotal role in enhancing graduate employability. This notion is grounded in the employers' perception that graduates should possess the readiness to learn and excel in the facets of "how to learn" or the essential aspect of "learning to learn." These aspects necessitate dedicated emphasis during the educational tenure. Moreover, the mastery of technical skills surfaced as a salient determinant, garnering agreement from 0.79 (30) respondents. Employers substantiated this aspect by highlighting that competence in specialized technical skills is a fundamental criterion, coupled with the need for advanced technical proficiencies within students' repertoire.

Parallelly, effective communication skills garnered a considerable consensus, attaining a rating of 0.74 (28) among respondents. Beyond domain-specific knowledge, communication emerged as a pivotal facet that propels graduate employability. Employers underscored the importance of imbuing graduates with strong communication skills, a crucial attribute that readies them for the professional realm. In tandem with these pivotal factors, certain attributes scored below the 0.7 threshold, including adeptness in equipment handling, decision-making competence, profound subject knowledge, and English language proficiency. Despite their individual scores, these attributes still contribute significantly to the employability of PERDA-TECH graduates.

Remarkably, findings highlighted a profound positive sentiment towards hiring PERDA-TECH graduates, with a resounding 74% of respondents expressing a high willingness to engage these graduates in their workforce. This sentiment is further bolstered by the remarkable statistic that 58% of the most recent batch of graduates, during the study period, were not only successfully placed in industrial training but also secured subsequent employment opportunities. Collectively, these findings shed light on the multifaceted dynamics that shape graduate employability, stressing not only technical skills but also the pivotal role of soft skills and a holistic educational alignment with industry requisites.

These findings align with Wafi et al. (2023) which emphasized the transformation of job seekers into job creators among TVET graduates through talent management modules. The emphasis on graduates' readiness for diverse career paths and continuous learning, as they cultivate an intrinsic desire for new knowledge. The development of entrepreneurial skills resonates with your findings on adaptability and holistic employability. The findings also align with Noor (2023) which investigated employability skills needed for TVET graduates from an industry expert perspective. These enhance the understanding of alignment between employer perceptions and industry requirements.

5. Strategic Recommendations

The study's comprehensive findings have led to the development of strategic proposals aimed at elevating the PERDA-TECH program, ensuring alignment with the SDGs 4 and 8. These proposals are rooted in both the quantitative and qualitative feedback garnered from the study participants.

In consonance with PERDA-TECH's overarching vision to emerge as a prominent technical education institution, deeply entrenched in skill development, and driven by its mission to deliver high-quality technical education attuned to market demands, the study's results underscore pivotal determinants that decisively influence the employability of graduates. Importantly, the study emphasizes that the desire for continuous learning and skill acquisition, mastery of technical competencies, and effective communication skills stand as the principal factors shaping graduate employability. These attributes resonated well with SDG4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education. By nurturing a learning environment that empowers graduates with practical skills, technical expertise, and communication proficiency, PERDA-TECH aligns with SDG4's emphasis on ensuring accessible and relevant education that equips

individuals for meaningful participation in the workforce. Moreover, the study's findings highlight the significance of soft skills such as effective communication in English, aligned with the demands of a globalized job market. This emphasis on holistic skill development encapsulates the spirit of SDG8, which focuses on promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. The study's insights resonate with SDG8's call for enhancing employability through skill enhancement and ensuring decent working conditions.

By integrating these strategic insights, PERDA-TECH can position itself as a hub of holistic education, addressing the aspirations of SDG4 by imparting relevant skills and fostering lifelong learning. Simultaneously, the institution can contribute to SDG8's objectives by empowering graduates with the multidimensional proficiencies necessary to excel in a rapidly evolving job landscape. This multifaceted approach not only empowers graduates but also equips them to positively impact their communities and contribute to sustainable economic growth, aligning with the broader global agenda outlined by the United Nations through the SDGs. The following are the strategic recommendations.

5.1   Implement Industry-Based Programs

This strategic initiative is aimed at cultivating a training paradigm that mirrors the authentic dynamics of the real-world professional landscape, wherein these skills find practical application. By crafting a training milieu that faithfully replicates industry settings, students are afforded the invaluable opportunity to apply their acquired skills within tangible scenarios. The integration of apprenticeship programs, coupled with insights gleaned from seasoned industry practitioners, augments the efficacy of skills training manifold. This comprehensive approach not only bolsters technical acumen through immersive, hands-on methodologies, but also exposes students to the gamut of essential soft skills in high demand within the contemporary labor market. This is in tandem with Noor (2023) which provides valuable evidence to support the strategic recommendation of implementing industry-based programs. The perspectives of industry experts underscore the benefits of such programs in equipping TVET graduates with the skills and experiences needed to thrive in the workforce. By integrating these insights, educational institutions can create a pathway towards enhancing graduate employability and ensuring a smoother transition from education to industry.

At its core, the proposed strategy encapsulates the foundational principle of "Bring PERDA-TECH into the workforce," underscoring the imperative of aligning the program with industry requisites and equipping graduates for seamless entry into gainful employment. Through the assimilation of industry-immersed programs, PERDA-TECH can bridge the chasm that often exists between classroom pedagogy and the practical exigencies of the professional realm. This strategy resonates with the profound significance of furnishing students with a training ecosystem that mirrors their eventual workplace, thereby empowering them to cultivate skills that resonate profoundly with employer expectations.

The augmentation of apprenticeships and mentorship by industry luminaries serves to fortify the program's efficacy by bestowing students with invaluable insights and firsthand experiential knowledge. This multifaceted approach culminates in endowing PERDA-TECH graduates not only with technical prowess but also with the soft skills and entrepreneurial attributes that are quintessential in contemporary industries. This holistic transformation renders graduates not only eminently employable but also aptly equipped to navigate the intricacies of the modern workforce, thereby propelling them towards triumphant career trajectories.

5.2   Improving Soft Skills and English Language Proficiency

The acquisition of these skills significantly enhances a student's employability upon graduation from PERDA-TECH. Among these, the elevation of soft skills assumes paramount importance, encompassing attributes such as collaborative adeptness, a demonstration of unwavering professionalism and strong work ethic, adept problem-solving capabilities, and the cultivation of leadership traits. Furthermore, a commendable command of the English language emerges as pivotal, enabling graduates to articulate themselves with precision and effectiveness within their professional milieu.

5.3   Strengthening and Refining the Curriculum Through Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Based on TVET

This endeavor bears profound significance as an integral facet of academic advancement, aiming to augment the efficacy of prevailing programs. The paramount principle of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) must assume primacy, whereby strategic elements are seamlessly interwoven into the curriculum's fabric. This strategic focus should pivot on dual realms: first, the meticulous sharpening of specific competencies underpinning practical proficiencies; and second, the holistic nurturing of generic competencies encompassing soft skills and the art of effective communication, highlighted by a robust grasp of the English language.

Furthermore, existing programs warrant recalibration to embrace the imperatives of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) and the contemporary requisites of industries. A pivotal facet is the infusion of digital proficiencies across diverse programs, a step that amplifies the alignment with the dynamic demands of the modern landscape. Jafar et al. (2020) complements this strategic recommendation by its highlight on the significance of teacher competencies in the IR 4.0 era. Continuous quality improvement should encompass both curriculum enhancement and teacher professional development to ensure that TVET education remains effective and responsive to the changing needs of industries.

By strengthening the foundation of soft skills and proficient English communication competencies, PERDA-TECH's graduates stand poised to meet the exacting requisites of the employment domain. Armed with these indispensable proficiencies, graduates will not only articulate their ideas cogently but also seamlessly collaborate with peers and adroitly surmount novel challenges that unfurl in their professional journey. This comprehensive approach unites seamlessly with the imperative of enhancing employability and fostering graduates who are poised to thrive in an ever-evolving work environment. Budiharso and Tarman (2020) recommendations on quality improvement, and the concept of quality improvement highlighted by Sharifah Syahirah et al. (2015) also collectively underscore the importance of enhancing the TVET curriculum. By continuously refining and aligning the curriculum with industry requisites, educational institutions can equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in their chosen fields and contribute effectively to the workforce.

6.   Conclusion

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) constitutes a pivotal educational avenue that must not be overlooked, as it holds the potential to transform Malaysia into a nation enriched with graduates proficient in diverse domains, ranging from management to technical and social spheres. The embodiment of Technical Skills epitomizes the fruition of meticulously crafted, high-caliber curricula, resulting in the acquisition of targeted technical proficiencies. However, the veritable efficacy of a well-designed curriculum hinges upon its adept dissemination.

The global pandemic has highlighted the need for adaptable educational delivery, with skills training programs experiencing unprecedented challenges. Yet, the panorama of skills cultivation extends beyond technical skill alone; the integration of soft skills is equally paramount. These skills, transcending entrepreneurial endeavors, stand as quintessential attributes in numerous industries. As we navigate this juncture, it becomes evident that PERDA-TECH's trajectory should be steered towards the enrichment of students' soft skills, underscored by proficient English communication.

Addressing this imperative can be catalyzed through a multipronged approach, encompassing the integration of communication modules within the curriculum, orchestrating interactive workshops and training sessions dedicated to honing communication finesse, and affording students ample opportunities to practice and refine their English proficiency. Augmenting this endeavor, the creation of an enabling environment that fosters active engagement and discourse in English will indubitably contribute to the holistic enhancement of students' communication prowess.

Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG4 and SDG8), this strategic direction fortifies the foundation of quality education and lifelong learning, fostering a robust framework for skills development and employability enhancement. By equipping graduates with both technical and soft skills, including proficiency in English communication, PERDA-TECH not only advances its own mission but also substantively contributes to the broader national and global agendas of economic growth, sustainable development, and social empowerment. Thus, this transformative journey propels PERDA-TECH as a beacon of innovation and education, steering its graduates towards a future ripe with opportunities and success on the ever-evolving global stage.

Acknowledgement

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