

DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESS IN LOGISTICS GRADUATES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Dazmin Daud CMILT

Faculty of Business and Information Science, UCSI University,
Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA.

dazmindaud@ucsiuniversity.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This paper exemplifies the determinants of success in logistics graduates revealed by logisticians who started their carrier from zero working experience and faced various working challenges to achieve carrier in their organizations. The key purpose of the study is to investigate the factors that bring them to the mark of success as a logistician. Data was collected through recorded interviews based on self-constructed questions. Throughout, the research was conducted on practical echelon. Each of the respondents considered clear vision as the foremost factor. Some other factors shared commonly were up to date information, patience, determination, quality of working performance and talkative person. Results are discussed and some recommendations are ultimately provided.

Keywords; logistics graduates, curriculum, higher education institutions, success

INTRODUCTION

The academic world today is considered diverse and more challenging. To survive and develop in the next 21st century, logistics graduates from higher education institutions (HEIs) must move towards innovation in a way to build and obtain competitive advantage. They will not get far in success if they lack to become a competent worker, hard work, commitment or devotion. HEIs in Malaysia should have an adaptive style to incorporate the demands of changed academic and logistics industry requirements. For effective transformation of graduates into a success story there must be a shared vision divided into different success factors or different milestones leading towards success. In Malaysia, there exist many examples of graduates who had just leaving universities without any working experience but later acquired great success in logistics industry. This indicates that there are factors that attribute to the success of a logistician. Malaysian logistics graduates should have an adaptive style to incorporate the demands of changed working environment in logistics.

The objective of this study is to identify the factors that make academic success in logistics undergraduate programme (LUP) certain. There are LUPs which facing a lot criticism from academician and logistics practitioner (for examples see Myers, Griffith, Daugherty & Lusch, 2004; van Hoek, 2001). This includes logistics graduates who were unable to cope with the real working environment and HEIs were unable to supply adequate logistics graduates to the industry. Apart from focusing at broad area of logistics educational needs, there are factors that contribute to the progress of a logistics graduate. If a higher education institution which offers a high quality of logistics curriculum, then certainly excellency is guaranteed. Tam (2014) pointed that academicians and instructional designers who are engaged in curriculum should develop a high quality of curriculum in order to gain excellent. If logistics curriculum at higher education institutions is not meeting the logistics industry standard, it may turn away potential students from enrolment in the logistics program. Therefore, keeping in view

the needs for excellent in logistics program, higher education institutions must be focused on quality curriculum. This study is designed on practical approach using interviews from logistics practitioners to find out the factors of success as a logistician. For accurate analysis, interviews were recorded to know the respondents' priority success factor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies on determinant of logistics curriculum success put a great impact on the broad area of logistics curriculum. There are many literature reviews that described the determinants of the successful logistics curriculum around the globe. Continuous improvement on logistics curriculum and changing teaching method are the two factors that contribute the success of logistics program towards the industry (Gravier & Farris, 2008). This is to make sure logistics programme continue to increase in respond to industry demand. HEIs must ensure relevant subjects suitable for logistics programme. To match with the needs in industry the selection of subjects must be function-oriented (Wu, 2007). For instance, with the high demand in supply chain management by the industry, HEIs should consider operations management as one of the core subject in a logistics programme.

The role of logistics practitioners has a huge impact on logistics curriculum. Logistics practitioners must provide salient into to any gap between the coverage of logistics courses and the needs for industry in the logistics curriculum (Lutz & Birou, 2013). Logistics practitioners are able to provide constructive inputs into the logistics curriculum so that issues such as lacking of market demand and lacking of relevant knowledge and skills can be reduced (van Hoek, 2001).

A successful logistics program must have an effective internship programme as part of its curriculum. Literally, internships provide greater opportunities to learn about an occupation and an individual's career self-concept (Sargent & Domberger, 2007). The outcomes of an effective internship programme, will contribute skills, knowledge and talent to logistics students (Lim, Dazmin & Jonathan, 2012). This makes them marketable when they work in the logistics industry after they graduate.

The significance of government to logistics curriculum success is reported in a number of studies. In the United States, the study of logistics has gained popularity due to Government intervention (Lancioni et al., 2001). Ozment and Keller (2011) have proposed several measures for the government to promote and develop logistics curriculum. The measures include establishing recognition of logistics programmes, setting up a national centre to advance logistics education, and encouraging students in high schools are exposed to the logistics discipline as a possible career. The evolution of the study of logistics in a country should be carefully monitored by relevant government agencies so that the logistics curriculum is relevance from time to time (Southern, 2011).

There are literature reviews on a professional body that contributes to the success of logistics curriculum. For example, The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) has led efforts to promote the education and professional development of the transportation and logistics professional. According to Pohlen (2011), professional certification represents a key component on how the society has worked to educate and promote the development of the transportation and logistics professional. The continuous professional development or CPD offered by the professional body make graduates become more marketable in a industry (Holden & Harte, 2004).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted to figure out determinants of logistics curriculum success focusing on the logistics graduates who worked after a graduation and finally reached the success and now enjoying recognition in logistics fields. In nutshell, the aim is to identify success factors that were adopted by successful logistics graduates to reach at the distinctive level. Population of the study included established logistics graduates who initiated their careers establishments and faced all the hardships in bringing it to the point of success. A judgmental sampling technique was used and key successful logistics graduates falling in this category were selected for interview from Shah Alam, Selangor area. The sample elements are selected because they are believed to be representatives of the population of interest and are expected to serve the research purpose of a study (Cooper & Schindler, 2013).

Respondents for this study were initially approached through phone calls for appointments. Since interviews had to be conducted to solicit responses therefore, all the prospects were briefed about the purpose and significance of the study. Individuals showed their willingness to participate in this survey were later approached personally at specified time and date. Interviews were recorded through audio to come at certain conclusion. Overall 16 logistics graduates who were currently working s were selected. The instrument used for data collection was personal interview. These open-ended questions were designed in order to capture the determinants of success in logistics graduates. There were two sections of the instrument. Section A was designed to capture respondent's demographical information such as working experience, position held in a company, and type of company (local or international company). Section B consisted of 9 self-developed items. These were open-ended questions which were designed to capture the determinants of success in logistics graduates.

Each interview was consisting of average 30 minutes in duration. Questions were based on past perspective of every respondent. Interviews were started with introduction of the researcher, the objectives of the study, the methodology and then of the respondents. Then it moved towards the nature of work and gradually focused on the objective of the study i.e. how the respondents gave their views pertaining to the success in logistics career and what type of obstacles they faced to get an extreme level of success.

This activity took place between February 2, 2015 and June 26, 2015. The results were then analyzed independently by the researcher in order to identify common themes. The list from each respondent was compared and the duplicate and irrelevant items removed. Themes were then coded, grouped and reconciled. These qualitative procedures were based on the guidance from Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2002).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Four respondents were not able to participate. Thus, only twelve respondents were participated in this study. The responding respondents were all male. All of them occupied junior positions in their respective organizations with an average of 2.9 years working experience. 8 (66.7%) of them worked in local logistics firms and the balance worked in multinational logistics firms.

Several interesting findings are obtained from this study. Figure 1 shows complete detail of success factors in logistics career as reported by respondents. All sixteen factors are grouped as "non-academic" factors. None from the respondents emphasized the requirement for the success factors are purely academic, for instance the high cumulative of grade point average (CGPA). Six factors were commonly found from all respondents. These factors are vision, up

to date information, patience, determination, quality of working performance and talkative person.

The most inspiring fact was observed about their clear vision and their subsistence towards it, no matter what kind of company they were working, all of them were firmly persistent towards their vision. Meaning, they knew what they were studied in the logistics programme and they knew well about their job as a logistician. According to de Jong and Kemp (2003), a worker will be able to contribute to constructive innovation if he or she has a clear vision. This leads to the productivity not only to the worker but also to the company. In addition to that, vision is one of the prominent themes when dealing with change in the working environment (Dvir, Kass & Shamir, 2004).

Updating with latest and current information is the second influencing factor which had derived from respondents. In such competitive market in logistics environment, the “know-how” concept must be updated in order for logistics graduates to survive at the workplace. Developing knowledge and skills at the workplace may increase the market value of the graduate. A logistics worker who has latest and adequate information about his or her job contributes to productivity. Bosch-Sijtsema, Ruohomäki and Vartiainen (2009) have provided practical implications on this issue. They believed that latest and current information would contribute to improve productivity.

Patience in performing one’s job is the third factor on which the success of the logistician. Patience in performing a job is needed especially in the working environment is robust, uncertainty and challenging. Ups and downs are fact in working life. One can lose patience in the time of stressful working condition. Findings from Figure 1 showed that patience determines the success of a logistics worker particularly in the time of crisis and stress at the workplace. This element plays an important role in organizations and workers can use technique such as emotional self-regulation to enhance their patience (Corner & Sekerka, 2014).

Another key factor was reported as “determination” which accelerates success factor for logistician. Once a worker is valued by his or her organization up to standard expectation, the worker will become loyal towards his or her job. This leads to success. This factor is considered as the success factor by previous studies (for examples see Hennequin, 2007; Altman, 2009). The fifth important success factor is quality of performance (or work). With the advent of competitiveness in a working environment, logistics organizations demand competent logisticians. It is important for logistics organization to have competent logistician in order to produce high quality of work (Dazmin et al., 2011). Talkative personality is the last factor which needs to be considered. As logistics activities are grouped under services, a talkative personality is required to deal with stakeholders involve in logistics. A constructive talk positively related to success people in life while dysfunctional talk related to unproductive people (Rogelberg et al., 2013).

Other influencing features which can be regarded as a success for a logistics graduate working in a logistics industry are commitment on work, skillful workforce, concentration, constructive competitiveness, interest in doing a work, honesty, adaptable with working environment, fast responsiveness, planning a work and team working. These success factors are not shared among the respondents. The complete list is shown in Figure 1.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This qualitative study indicated the possible determinants of success for logistics graduates when they working in logistics organizations in Malaysia. This study is exploratory in nature. It tried to figure out the factors caused ultimate success to logistics graduates working in

logistics organization. The findings can be generalized to limited vicinity. There are sixteen possible success factors identified. However, these factors can be further validated through empirical analysis by establishing causal relationship between such variables. Due to limitation of space, only six factors were discussed here.

Determinants of success factors for logistics graduates need to be developed in accordance with the need of local and international trends in logistics industry. In order for these logistics graduates to be accepted and recognized by their organization, not only they must have good academic results but also several success factors as listed in Figure 1. HEIs need to blend their logistics curriculum not only to focus on all the academic courses but also to have programmes that nurture talent and soft skills among logistics students. Educators in the HEIs need to look into the weightage of soft skills components which can be included in the logistics curriculum (Lutz & Birou, 2013; Wu et al., 2013).

This study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was taken from an association's contact list. There is no doubt that there are many logistics graduates than those in the list. Future research direction would be to replicate this study among Malaysian logistics graduates in the more large respondents before any generalization could be drawn. Second, this study is perceptive rather than viewing it from actual performance data. In future, it is recommended that the population should come from logistics graduates who had graduated from public and private higher education institutions in Malaysia.

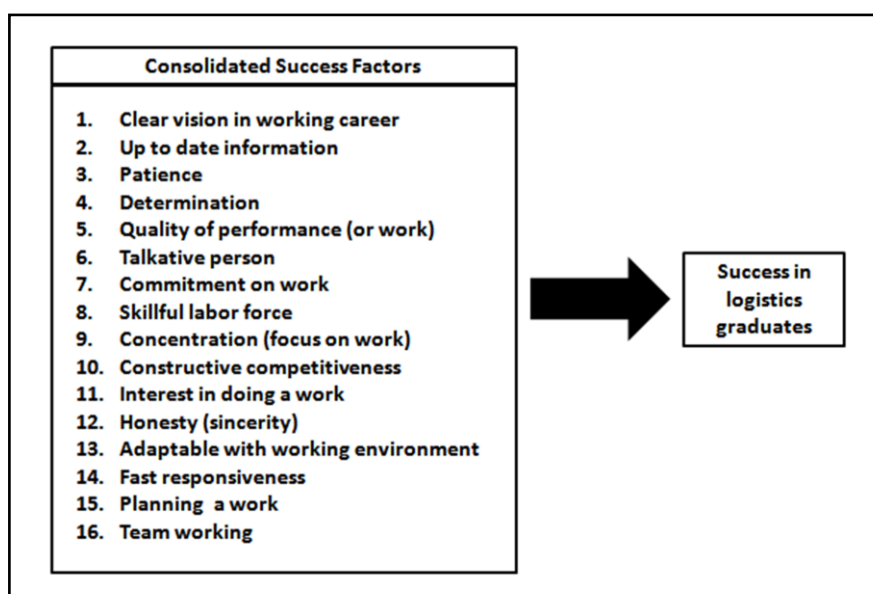


Figure 1: Consolidated Success Factors or Diagram

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