

Factors Influencing the Improvement of Students' Communication Skill: An Industrial Training Intervention

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Abstract

Communication skill has been globally recognized as among required attributes for graduates employability. This situation urges the stakeholders to find ways in preparing students with excellent communication skill. An implementation of iCGPA in public universities is one of recent initiatives taken by Ministry of Education with the aims to produce graduates who are balanced in both academics and non-academics. Undergoing industrial training also is a good platform for students to improve their communication skills as they being exposed to hands-on-work. Thus, this paper aims to examine students' communication skill improvement based on industrial training intervention. It also aims to examine the relationship between communication skill improvement and selected factors, and further explore the predictors of this improvement. A quantitative method using pre and post survey was adopted. The survey was conducted among undergraduate students from six different public universities in Malaysia. Overall, findings of paired sample t-test reveal that students' communication skill improvement has developed significantly after undergoing industrial training. The improvement were found to be correlated with program of study, motivation, leadership styles and organizational cultures. Using multiple regression analysis; extrinsic motivation, low power distance culture, medium size of organization and laissez-faire leadership style are the best predictor of communication skill improvement.

Keywords: Communication skill; Industrial training; Students; Public universities.



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1. Introduction

There has been global consensus on the importance of communication skill in graduates' employability (Crossman and Clarke, 2010; Devadason *et al.*, 2010). As these skills are important, students need to improve their communication skill in order to have better employment opportunity upon completing their study. Thus, it is not surprisingly that graduates employability has been a long-standing issue discussed by higher learning institutions, employers and policy makers. Until now, the stakeholders are trying to formulate ways and initiatives as preparation to produce holistic graduates, who are excellent in academics as well as in social life. Like other countries, Malaysia through Ministry of Education has outlined several initiatives in order to increase graduates' employability rates. A recent alternative is implementation of Integrated Cumulative Point Average (iCGPA) in public universities. This iCGPA basically a system that will assessed students' academic and non-academic performance using constructive alignment which integrate its learning outcomes, delivery process and assessment. At the end of semester, students will obtain a spider web, showing their performance based on eight domains of learning outcomes listed in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). However, the implementation of iCGPA is no longer compulsory for public universities as lecturers' attention had focused on documentation and monitor students' activities, which deviated from lectures' main tasks.

Apart from that, public universities required their undergraduate students to undergo industrial training. The industrial training refers to students' placement in an organization outside or inside the country, within a certain period of time before they are awarded certificate, diploma or degree (MOHE, 2006a). By undergoing industrial training, students are able to apply theory into practical work, have real work experience, and most importantly enhance their marketability. The industrial training also benefits higher learning institutions by collaborating with host organizations in terms of sharing latest knowledge and products through research (Cord *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, host organizations also obtain benefits from industrial training as they have an opportunity to identify potential candidates to be hired (Chi and Gursoy (2009) and to know latest knowledge, techniques and concept from the students (Cook *et al.*, 2004).

Despite of initiatives taken by the stakeholders, there are several factors lead to lack of graduates' employability, and worse result in unemployment. Top listing factor is the issue of greater mismatch of skills between learning skills provided in university and demand required by employers (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017; Shanmugam, 2017), which include communication skill. Second, the issue of generic skills deficiency among graduates as they are lacking with communication skills (Shanmugam, 2017). This issue still remain unresolved, as statistics from the National Graduate Employability Blueprint (2012-2017) reveal the similar issue, which contributed 55.8% of the problems (MOHE, 2006b). More recently, a 2018 Economic Report highlights the similar

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issues of skills shortages and skills mismatch in current workforce. Other than that, the rise of Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) provides tremendous change in future work, whereby the nature and work requirement will change (Rahim, 2017). With the changing of future work, it will implicate different skills required needed to be occupied by workers mainly for fresh graduates.

With the concern of abovementioned issues and problems, this study aims to examine the impact of industrial training on students' communication skill using pre and post survey method. It also aims to determine the relationship between students' communication skill and it influencing factors, and to explore the predictors of students' communication skill. There are six main influencing factors (independent variables) which are demographic profile of students (gender, ethnicity, field of study and academic performance), demographic profile of supervisors (gender, ethnicity, working experience and working position), demographic profile of organizational (types of sectors and companies, and organizational size), students' motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic), supervisors' leadership styles (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire), and lastly organisational culture (individualism versus collectivism and power distance).

1.1. Communication Skill

Communication can be defined as a process of sending information whereby both sender and receiver understand the meaning of what have been communicated (Keyton, 2011). Meanwhile, communication can be defined as a process where 'sender' transmits the message to 'receiver' through a right channel, and then the receiver give feedback on the message received, with both sender and receiver able to differentiate and aware of the communication context and try to minimize the interference or noise when the communication process takes place (Tubbs and Moss, 1983). According to Malaysian Higher Education, communication skill involves effective communication both in Malay and English languages which include different individual and different context of communication (MOHE, 2006a). Specifically, it refers to students' abilities to present ideas clearly, practice active listening and provide feedback (MOHE, 2006a). It also includes abilities to communicate with individuals from different cultures and possess with non-verbal skill in communication.

1.2. Communication Skill and Industrial Training

It is undeniable that industrial training serve as a platform in improving students' communication skills due to positive outcomes were reported by previous studies (Devadason *et al.*, 2010; Freudenberg *et al.*, 2011; Lim and Mustafa, 2013; Mat). Studies by Mat and Omar M. Z. *et al.* (2008) share similar findings where they found students show an improvement in their communication skill after undergoing industrial training. By undergoing industrial training, they are expected to be able to speak fluently, with confidence and be knowledgeable to attract future employer's attention. Generally, English language is the main barrier why university graduates are shortage with communication skill (Ismail N. A., 2011). They are unable to speak fluently in English, as well as lack of writing skill. Therefore, a study by [13] revealed that industrial training serves as a platform for students to polish their communication skill and spoken English proficiency.

2. Methodology

In order to achieve the research objectives, this study used pre and post survey. The survey was conducted through distribution of questionnaires to student who about to undergo and complete their industrial training. In the pre survey, questionnaires were self-distributed to 2000 undergraduate students from six public universities in Malaysia. However, after data screening, only 1,227 questionnaires were usable. In the post survey, only 485 usable questionnaires were collected. The questionnaire consists of three sections; Section A for demographic profiles (students, supervisors and organization), Section B for students' motivation, supervisors' leadership styles and organizational culture and Section C outlined questions related to communication skill. The communication skill instrument was adapted from various sources (Chen and Starosta, 2000; Duran, 1992). Motivation items were also adapted from various sources like (Chiaburu and Tekleab, 2005; Ismail A. *et al.*, 2010; Midgley *et al.*, 1998; Pintrich and DeGroot, 1990). In regards to supervisors' leadership styles, a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) by Bass and Avolio (1995) was employed. This study derived six items on individualism versus collectivism and power distance culture dimensions (three items for each dimension) from Hofstede G. (2008). Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data being collected. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze demographic data while generic skills improvement were analyze using paired t-test analysis. Pearson correlation was used to analyze relationship between predictor factors and communication skill. Step wise multiple regression was carried out in order to explore the significant predictor factors on communication skill improvement.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Results

Table 1 reports analysis of students' demographic profile for both phases of survey. In pre survey, a total of 2000 questionnaires were self-distributed but only 1,227 questionnaires were usable to analyze. Meanwhile a total of 485 usable questionnaires were collected in the post survey through online medium. The results obtained were analyzed as shown in Table 1.

Table-1. Students' demographic profile

| Students' Demographic | Pre-training | | Post-training | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|------|---------------|------|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 464 | 37.8 | 173 | 35.7 |
| Female | 763 | 62.2 | 312 | 64.3 |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| Malay | 848 | 69.1 | 363 | 74.8 |
| Chinese | 286 | 23.3 | 96 | 19.8 |
| Indian | 41 | 3.4 | 17 | 3.5 |
| Others | 52 | 4.2 | 9 | 1.9 |
| Field of study | | | | |
| Social Science (SS) | 390 | 31.8 | 142 | 29.3 |
| Science (S) | 395 | 32.2 | 154 | 31.8 |
| Engineering (E) | 442 | 36.0 | 189 | 39.0 |
| Academic Performance | | | | |
| Low | 47 | 3.8 | 20 | 4.1 |
| Average | 315 | 25.7 | 120 | 24.7 |
| Good | 525 | 42.8 | 226 | 46.6 |
| Excellent | 308 | 25.1 | 97 | 20.0 |

Table 2 illustrates supervisors' profile who being assigned to supervise the trainees during industrial training period. This profile is classified as gender, ethnicity, working position and working experience. The ratio of male supervisor compared to female supervisor is one to one. In general, Malay supervisors constitute more than half of the sample, the next largest consist of Chinese supervisors, followed by Indian and others. In the respect of working position, the majority of supervisors hold position as middle management and lower management. However, supervisors who hold position as top management slightly less supervised the trainees as it constitutes the lowest percentage of sample. With regards to working experience, supervisors who served more than 9 years dominate the sample. This indicates that this group of supervisors were highly experienced with their own work. It also appears that supervisor with working experience less than 3 years and 3 to 6 years account for almost similar percentage of sample, followed by the lowest percentage of 7 to 9 years working experience group.

Table-2. Supervisors' demographic profile

| Supervisors' Demographic | Frequency | % |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 240 | 49.5 |
| Female | 245 | 50.5 |
| Ethnicity | | |
| Malay | 331 | 68.2 |
| Chinese | 122 | 25.2 |
| Indian | 24 | 4.9 |
| Others | 8 | 1.6 |
| Position | | |
| Top management | 60 | 12.4 |
| Middle management | 227 | 46.8 |
| Lower management | 198 | 40.8 |
| Working experience (years) | | |
| Less than 3 | 120 | 24.7 |
| 3-6 | 123 | 25.4 |
| 7-9 | 69 | 14.2 |
| More than 9 | 173 | 35.7 |

The distribution of organisational profile was based on the respondents' industrial training venue or organisation where they attended the training. Table 3 depicts that this profile consists of types of sectors, types of companies and organisational size. Almost two third of the respondents attended training in the private sectors, while more than quarter choose public sector as their training placement. With respect of types of companies, more than half of the respondents attended their training in national companies as compared to multinational companies. In brief, almost half of the respondents attended industrial training in small organisation where the number of employees less than 50, as it appears the highest percentage (40.8%). Approximately, similar percentage was reported for those who attended industrial training in medium (28.5%) and large (30.7%) organisations.

Table-3. Organizational demographic profile

| Organizational Demographic | Frequency | % |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Type of sectors | | |
| Public | 155 | 32.0 |
| Private | 330 | 68.0 |
| Type of companies | | |
| National companies | 278 | 57.3 |
| Multinational companies | 207 | 42.7 |
| Organization size | | |
| Small (Less than 50 employees) | 198 | 40.8 |
| Medium (Between 50 to 150 employees) | 138 | 28.5 |
| Large (151 employees and above) | 149 | 30.7 |

Table 4 reports descriptive results of selected factors that influence students' communication skill improvement. Students' motivation is measured using two constructs, Intrinsic and Extrinsic. Table 4 illustrates that in total, students scored a mean of 5.52 and 5.50 in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation indicating that they highly agree with the both factors that motivate them to work during industrial training. Using score range introduced by Bass and Avolio (1995), the level of leadership style was categorised into high score (9 – 12), moderate score (5 – 8) and low score (0 – 4). Based on the overall mean score, supervisor hold high level of laissez-faire leadership style as it constitutes the highest score range of 8.61, followed by transactional leadership style with the score range of 8.38. However, the transformational leadership style accounts score range of 7.70, indicating the moderate level. Lastly, organisational culture is measured using two constructs, Individualism versus collectivism and Power distance. The level of organisational culture is registered along a seven point of scale ranging from 'Strongly disagree (1) to 'Strongly agree' (7) involving 6 items. Therefore, a higher score demonstrates a tendency to agree with the items indicating low individualism (moving towards collectivism) and low power distance. Results in Table 4 show that the overall mean of Individualism versus collectivism construct is inclined to agree that they are in Collectivism dimension at high level of agreement. Similarly, in the Power distance construct, mean of 5.33 shows their high level of agreement in the low Power distance dimension.

Table-4. Responses on selected factors

| Selected Factors | Mean/Score Range* | SD |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------|
| Intrinsic Motivation | 5.52 | 1.23 |
| Extrinsic Motivation | 5.50 | 1.31 |
| Transformational Leadership | 7.70* | 1.60 |
| Transactional Leadership | 8.38* | 1.93 |
| Laissez-Faire Leadership | 8.61* | 1.87 |
| Individualism versus Collectivism | 5.27 | 1.20 |
| Power Distance | 5.33 | 1.21 |

Table-5. Paired sample t-test of communication skill improvement

| Items | Communication skill | Mean | | Mean diff. | SD | t | Sig |
|-------|---|------|------|------------|------|--------|--------|
| | | Pre | Post | | | | |
| 1 | I use intended word when communicating. | 3.22 | 3.55 | 0.32 | 1.67 | 5.290 | .000** |
| 2 | I use words correctly when communicating. | 3.59 | 4.04 | 0.45 | 1.71 | 6.379 | .000** |
| 3 | I have no difficulty pronouncing some words. | 4.01 | 4.28 | 0.27 | 1.88 | 4.006 | .002** |
| 4 | I do not use professional jargon when communicating with others from different position. | 3.08 | 2.93 | -0.15 | 1.52 | -.328 | .029* |
| 5 | I find it easy to get along with others. | 5.21 | 5.36 | 0.15 | 1.30 | 6.404 | .011* |
| 6 | I can adapt to changing situations. | 5.29 | 5.44 | 0.14 | 1.21 | 7.084 | .010* |
| 7 | I generally know what type of behaviour is appropriate in any given situation. | 5.34 | 5.42 | 0.08 | 1.21 | 5.992 | .153 |
| 8 | I am relaxed when talking with my supervisor. | 5.05 | 5.28 | 0.23 | 1.35 | 8.205 | .000** |
| 9 | I am comfortable when talking with my supervisor. | 5.13 | 5.36 | 0.23 | 1.44 | 6.338 | .000** |
| 10 | I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures. | 5.07 | 5.41 | 0.34 | 1.34 | 9.381 | .000** |
| 11 | My communication style is different in different situation (ie. Communication style with supervisor and colleagues is different). | 5.69 | 5.61 | -0.09 | 1.32 | -1.924 | .150 |
| 12 | I prefer to use email when sending short message that required quick and short answer. | 4.18 | 4.33 | 0.14 | 1.99 | 5.256 | .111 |
| 13 | I prefer to use face to face communication when discussing complex issues. | 5.93 | 5.79 | -0.14 | 1.37 | -3.274 | .024* |
| | Overall communication skill | 4.68 | 4.83 | 0.15 | 0.65 | 5.147 | .000** |

** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In measuring the communication skill improvement, this study has conducted paired samples t-test analysis of sample means based on a seven point-scale (refer Table 5). Thus, higher mean score in post-survey than the pre-survey indicates communication skill improvement (positive mean difference). In this study, communication skill is calculated by the average of the difference between pre- and post-training of all 13 communication skill items (mean post-training minus mean pre-training). The mean difference of this communication skill is also known as communication skill improvement which is self-perceived communication skill (pre-post). Table 5 shows students have benefited from undergone their industrial training as the results exhibit that overall mean was reported to increase from 4.68 to 4.83. In examining results in individual items, it was found that means increased significantly in most items, except for Items 7, 11 and 12.

Table-6. Correlation between predictor factors and communication skill

| Factors | | Communication skill | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------|
| Students' Demographic Profile | Gender | Pearson correlation | .016 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .722 |
| | Ethnicity | Pearson correlation | -.030 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .508 |
| | Field of study | Pearson correlation | .115* |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .011 |
| Academic performance (CGPA) | Pearson correlation | .015 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .745 | |
| Supervisors' Demographic Profile | Gender | Pearson correlation | .001 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .991 |
| | Ethnicity | Pearson correlation | -.017 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .714 |
| | Working experience | Pearson correlation | .079 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .083 |
| Position | Pearson correlation | -.037 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .418 | |
| Organizational Demographic Profile | Types of sectors | Pearson correlation | -.051 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .260 |
| | Types of companies | Pearson correlation | .058 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .288 |
| | Organizational size | Pearson correlation | .048 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .292 |
| Students' Motivation | Intrinsic | Pearson correlation | .334** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | Extrinsic | Pearson correlation | .365** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| Supervisors' Leadership Styles | Transformational | Pearson correlation | .242** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | Transactional | Pearson correlation | .129** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .004 |
| | Laissez-faire | Pearson correlation | .174** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| Organizational culture | Individualism | Pearson correlation | .245** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |
| | Power distance | Pearson correlation | .324** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |

The second objective of the study was to examine the relationship between influencing factors and students' communication skill improvement. Using Pearson correlation, Table 6 exhibits that significant correlations were found with students' field of study ($r=0.115$, $p=0.011$), intrinsic motivation ($r=0.334$, $p=0.000$), extrinsic motivation ($r=0.365$, $p=0.000$), individualism culture ($r=0.245$, $p=0.000$), low power distance culture ($r=0.324$, $p=0.000$), transformational leadership ($r=0.247$, $p=0.000$), transactional leadership ($r=0.129$, $p=0.004$) and laissez-faire leadership ($r=0.167$, $p=0.000$).

A multiple regression analysis with stepwise method was used in determining the influences of selected factors on students' communication skill improvement. Since the multiple regressions analysis only analyzes variables with continuous data, this study then has recoded the categorical data (such as gender, ethnicity and field of study) into dichotomous variable or known as dummy variable.

As illustrated in Table 7, the correlation between dependent variable (students' communication skill) and four predictor factors is 0.43. It also suggests that the relationship between the four predictor factors and the dependent variable is significant as $F(4, 458) = 25.412$ at $p < 0.01$. These four factors explained 17.4% variation in students' perception of their communication skill, which is acceptable for Social Science research (Gaur and Gaur, 2009). The regression coefficients (B) of four predictor factors are shown in Table 8. It shows that extrinsic motivation is the

most significant factor in affecting students' communication skill. It also shows that the change in the dependent variable, when there is a one-unit change in the predictor variable (Hairet, 2010). For example, by controlling the effects of low power distance culture, medium organisation and laissez-faire leadership, one unit increase in extrinsic motivation produces an increase of 0.162 in students' communication skill. There are two out of the four factors have negative sign indicating an inverse relationship with the dependent variable (students' communication skill). In other words, less supervision by laissez-faire leader will result in higher communication skill improvement. Additional explanation for dummy variable is needed where students who undergone their industrial training in medium organisation has less communication skill improvement than those in large organisation (reference category).

Table-6. Regression model (students' communication skill)

| Model | R | R ² | Adjusted R ² | Std. Error of the estimate |
|-------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.370 ^a | 0.137 | 0.135 | 0.61184 |
| 2 | 0.397 ^b | 0.158 | 0.154 | 0.60500 |
| 3 | 0.413 ^c | 0.171 | 0.165 | 0.60105 |
| 4 | 0.426 ^d | 0.182 | 0.174 | 0.59768 |

1. Motivation (extrinsic)

2. Motivation (extrinsic), Organisational culture (low power distance)

3. Motivation (extrinsic), Organisational culture (low power distance), Organisational size (medium)

4. Motivation (extrinsic), Organisational culture (low power distance), Organisational size (medium), Supervisors' leadership style (laissez-faire)

Table-7. Multiple regressions analysis (stepwise) for predicting students' communication skill

| Model | B | t | Sig |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| Constant | 1.478 | 8.049 | .000** |
| Motivation (<i>extrinsic</i>) | 0.162 | 5.185 | .000** |
| Organisational culture (<i>low power distance</i>) | 0.088 | 3.193 | .002** |
| Organisational size (<i>medium</i>) | -0.174 | -2.812 | .005** |
| Supervisors' leadership style (<i>laissez-faire</i>) | -0.038 | -2.487 | .013* |

** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Based on the multiple regression analysis result, the following equation was formulated to predict the students' communication skill upon completion of their industrial training.

$$Y = 1.478 + 0.162X_1 + 0.088X_2 - 0.174X_3 - 0.038X_4$$

where,

Y = Communication skill improvement

X₁ = Motivation (extrinsic)X₂ = Organisational culture (low power distance)X₃ = Organisational size (reference_large)X₄ = Supervisors' leadership style (laissez-faire)

3.2. Discussions

The findings of present study is similar to findings reported by Mat and Nabi (2013) which found students' communication skill were improved after completing their industrial training. This findings however, contradicts those of Omar M. K. et al. (2012) who found industrial training increase students' technical skills.

This findings indicated that most of demographic profiles do not have relationship with communication skill improvement, except for field of study factor. The findings was contrast with a study by Dania et al. (2014) who found relationship between gender and employability skills. The relationship of communication skill improvement and both motivation factors support argument made by Herzberget (1959), where an individual who intrinsically motivated result in positive outcomes. Although Herzberg claimed that extrinsic motivation is some sort of movement factors and only provide short term satisfaction, but it is believed that students need these movement factors in order to motivate them intrinsically which support prior studies (Guerrero and Floyd, 2008; Martin et al., 1999). In fact, results of multiple regressions exhibited that extrinsic motivation has the main influence on students' communication skill which support the claim made by learning theorists (Bandura, 1977; Skinner, 1971; Vygotsky, 1978). The finding might be related to the influence of supervisors and colleagues who encourage students to give opinion during discussion session, which subsequently improve their communication skill (Rahman et al., 2011; Yasin, 2011). The other explanation for this finding is the fact that students are motivated to communicate when they received praises and recognition from their supervisor and colleagues which is consistent with a study by (Kong, 2009).

It is interesting to note that both transformational and transactional leadership styles were positively correlated with communication skill. The correlation however, is greater in transformational than transactional leadership style. Similarly to Harrison (2011) in his study also found that transformational leadership is a more significant predictor in communication satisfaction than transactional leadership. These findings are related to the individualized consideration factor of transformational leadership where supervisors develop interpersonal relationship with students and pay attention to their needs (Bass, 1999), which consequently has a positive effect on students' communication skill. As predicted, there is a negative correlation between laissez-faire leadership style and

communication skill. Further analysis using multiple regressions also revealed that laissez-faire leadership influence in less improvement of students' communication skill. The negative influence is predictable as laissez-faire leadership exercise a "hands-off" approach (Bass and Avolio, 1994). In such situation, students might have less interaction with the supervisor as no feedback given to clarify their work. Consequently it causes low improvement in their communication skill as they are incompetent and inexperienced employees.

Findings of other correlation analyses show that there is a positive relationship between both organizational cultures (collectivism and low power distance) and students' communication skill. In addition, results of multiple regressions also exhibited that low power distance is one of the influencing factors on students' communication skill. In collectivism culture, individuals are expected to respect others' feelings; meanwhile in low power distance culture authority is equally distributed among members (Hofstede G., 1984). In both cultures, good relationships are built and open communication is emphasised; therefore students are encouraged to express their opinions and thoughts (Pendergast, 1994). Although past studies (Ashkanasy, 2002) has indicated that Malaysia has a high power distance culture, a strong human orientation in the superior-subordinate relationship has lead superior (supervisor) to consider others' opinion while interacting (Kennedy, 1993-2005).

4. Conclusions

From this study it was found that public university students in Malaysia had benefited from undergoing their industrial training, as proven to improve their communication skill. This improvement has been influenced by other factors such as motivation, culture, organizational size and supervisor's leadership styles. Thus, it is important for higher learning institutions and students to select the best placement for industrial training. In fact, organizations should play their roles to instill good organizational culture as well as implement good leadership styles. By considering the factors that may influence on students' generic skills improvement, higher learning institutions and host organisations are able to administer matters pertaining the industrial training more effectively, and thus fulfil its objectives. This study contributes to the industrial training programmes mainly to public universities in Malaysia by examining students' communication skill improvement using two phases of data collection. The study also contributes some practical implications to industrial training stakeholders by knowing the effectiveness of industrial training programme in developing future human capital with excellent communication skill.

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