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Role of “Abilympics” among Malaysian Polytechnics and College Community disabled students

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Abstract: This paper will focus on the role of “Abilympics”, which being as a platform for Malaysian Polytechnics and College Community disabled students to promote their talent and creativity in technical and vocational skills. The “Abilympics” derived from the word, “Olympics of Abilities” is a technical and vocational skills competition for people with disabilities which are held once every four years. However, the gap has previously varied between three to six years afterwards. The competition was organized to change people’s view of the potential and abilities of the disabled. Through the organization of this competition, the community became confident in the abilities of the disabled and thus improved job opportunities among technical and vocational education (TVET) students. The objectives of this study are to highlight the roles of stakeholders that involved in the Students Preparatory Training for Russia 2021 International “Abilympics” Competition and to review the strategic planning in the Students Preparatory Training for Russia 2021 International “Abilympics” Competition. This research study has been conducted through self observation method and the sample sizes for this research were focussing on five disabled students from Malaysian Polytechnics and College Community who have been selected to represent Malaysia in Russia 2021 International “Abilympics” Competition. These students have participated in Malaysia “Abilympics” Competition 2018 National Level and won the gold medal based on their various skills category. Therefore, the role of “Abilympics” is essential for Malaysian Polytechnics and College Community disabled students to being recognized in any technical and vocational industries in Malaysia.

Keywords: Abilympics, Technical and Vocational Education (TVET), disabled students.

INTRODUCTION

The “Abilympics” derived from the word, “Olympics of Abilities” is a technical and vocational skills competition for people with disabilities. It aims to forward the potential capabilities of PWD’s (Person with Disabilities) that they have skills on par with normal persons and encourages a surge in employment opportunities for them. The competition has been held once every four years, though the gap has previously varied between three to six years afterwards. The competition was organized to change people’s view of the potential and abilities of the disabled. Through the organization of this competition, the community became confident in the abilities of the disabled and thus improved job opportunities among technical and vocational education (TVET) students. In the other point of view, technical vocational education and training (TVET) is a remarkable tool in producing skilled manpower for various sectors in Malaysian’s economy. Progressively, TVET is creating various jobs for Malaysia citizen, implies lifelong learning and contribute to the wealth generation.

Overview: According to (Harry, 1995), in year 1981, the first “Abilympics” was held in Tokyo to honour the United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons. The objective was to demonstrate that people with disabilities are talented in many different work skills and should be offered equal opportunities in technical and vocational area. The second “Abilympics” was held in Colombia in 1985 while after six years later, in year 1991, the third “Abilympics” has been held in Hong Kong. Both competitions showed the increase on participation and a greater number of skills contested. Since then, “Abilympics” was held in Perth 1995, Prague 2000, Delhi 2003, Shizuoka 2007, Seoul 2011 and Bordeaux 2016. (Mind, 2019) stated that the “Abilympics” tests various skills in five categories, such as services (hairdressing, jewellery, etc), ICT (e-Sports, computer programming, computer assembly, poster design, word processing, etc), industry (welding, aircraft maintenance, CAD industrial design, etc), craft (painting, embroidery, floral arrangement, etc) and food (cooking, bakery and restaurant services).

Literature Review

According to a study by Harvey (2001), the majority of people with disabilities in the U.S. are not working. However, TVET has a positive impact on this group with improved work skills and the ability to market people with disabilities is an important goal for TVET-based education. (A.Y Malle, R.Pirttimaa, 2015) Robinson (2000) stated that employers find it is difficult to recruit potential employees. This is because employers need potential employees to have both technical skills and soft skills where technical skills are the skills needed to perform certain tasks, while Soft skills, are the skills needed to keep working and thriving in the chosen career. Thus, potential employees need both types of skills to compete, secure and retain employment. (Bakar & Rashid, 2012)

Skills competitions among special needs students are held for the purpose of providing exposure to these disabilities in employment. It gives these students the opportunity to showcase their talents in the field of TVET while also exposing people with disabilities to compete using their skills. The competition also raises awareness and awareness of disability issues in the business world and in the general public. (Educational Activities Concerning Disability Employment • 1, 2016)

Abilympics is a series of contests of occupational skills, life skills, and the arts that demonstrates talented people in various fields. One of the objectives of this competition is to show that people with disabilities are talented in their work skills and should be offered equal opportunities in the field of TVET. (Fang, 1995)

Objectives of this study: The research was conducted with the purpose of achieving the following objectives:

- to highlight the roles of stakeholders that involved in the Students Preparatory Training for Russia 2021 International “Abilympics” Competition.
- to review the strategic planning in the Students Preparatory Training for Russia 2021 International “Abilympics” Competition.

METHOD

This research has been conducted through qualitative method. The strategic planning which includes the roles of stakeholders, types of training provided, training schedules and budgeted financial implications has been used as a secondary data. The period for data analysis is throughout in year 2019 and has been analyzed using self-administered observation. Five disabled students, three of them were from Polytechnic Premier Ibrahim Sultan and Polytechnic Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin while another two were from Selayang and Sungai Petani Community College have been selected as a sample in this study.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1:

The strategic planning of Polytechnics and Community College disabled Students Preparatory Training for Russia 2021 International “Abilympics” Competition involves stakeholders at the Ministry, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s) and industries. The roles of each stakeholder are detailed below:

No.	Organization	Roles
1.	Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (JPPKK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide financial allocation for sufficient training and facilities towards Polytechnics and Community College disabled students. b. Monitor the training process throughout the training period. c. Promote and enhance the image of disabled students to the public.
2.	Selayang Community College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Act as secretariat on behalf of Malaysian Council for Rehabilitation (MCR) for training throughout the year at the institution. b. Facilitators and connectors between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (JPPKK) iii. Federation of the Deaf Malaysia (MFD) iv. Malaysian Council for Rehabilitation (MCR) v. Le Meridien Hotel, Kuala Lumpur vi. Istana Hotel, Kuala Lumpur vii. Expert state of the related field viii. Newspapers and media ix. Coaches of each institution x. Lecturers who specialize in related fields as advisors. c. Collaborate, execute joint ventures and smart partnerships with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Federation of the Deaf Malaysia (MFD) i. Malaysian Council for Rehabilitation (MCR) ii. Le Meridien Hotel, Kuala Lumpur ii. Istana Hotel, Kuala Lumpur
3.	Polytechnic Premier Ibrahim Sultan Polytechnic Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Selayang Community College Sg. Petani Community College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Appoint coaches from each field that involves students from the institution b. Perform training to the students according to the schedule. c. Apply for financial allocation for training session.
4.	Federation of the Deaf Malaysia (MFD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provides psychological support within the context of individual needs of the deaf. b. Facilitate communication between participants and industry. c. Promoting JPPKK and Selayang Community College as disabled friendly institutions. d.
5.	Malaysian Council for Rehabilitation (MCR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Coordinate and oversee the psychological support and requirements of the participants. b. Coordination between International “Abylympics” and Malaysia “Abilympics”. c. Secretariat of “Abylympics” competition both nationally and internationally.
6.	Le Meridien Hotel, Kuala Lumpur Istana Hotel, Kuala Lumpur Langkawi Tourism Academic Baling Community College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Monitor and supervise student training at the intensive training level. b. Contribute expertise and knowledge in the field that can enhance students training.

Table 1: Roles of stakeholders involved in Students Preparatory Training for Russia 2021 International “Abilympics” Competition

According to Table 1, it shows that each of the stakeholders needs to play their respective roles and responsibilities to ensure that five “Abilympians” students of Malaysian Polytechnics and Community College succeed in the competition.

Objective 2:

Meanwhile, to review the strategic planning of Students Preparatory Training for Russia 2021 International “Abilympics” Competition based on types of training provided, training schedules and budgeted financial implications, it will be indicated in a summarized table below for further analysis.

Table 2. Summarized of Strategic Planning for Bakery (Cake Decoration)

No.	Skills Category	Institution	Types of training	Training Schedules (2019)	Budgeted Financial Implications (RM)					Total Cost (RM)
					21000	25000	27000	29000	42000	
1	Bakery (Cake Decoration)	Polytechnic Tunjaya Syed Sirajuddin (PTS5)	a. Chocolate tempering (seeding method), b. Molding chocolate (chocolate pralines): blueberry dark chocolate pralines.	February	-	2,800.00	4,000.00	2,700.00	150.00	9,650.00
				March	-	2,100.00	-	2,700.00	150.00	4,950.00
				April	4,350.00	3,000.00	-	5,000.00	2,650.00	15,000.00
				May	-	2,800.00	3,500.00	2,700.00	150.00	9,150.00
				June	-	2,100.00	-	2,700.00	150.00	4,950.00
				July	4,350.00	3,000.00	-	5,000.00	2,650.00	15,000.00
				August	-	2,800.00	3,000.00	2,700.00	150.00	8,650.00
				September	-	2,100.00	-	2,700.00	150.00	4,950.00
				October	4,350.00	3,000.00	-	5,000.00	2,650.00	15,000.00
				November	4,350.00	3,000.00	-	5,000.00	2,650.00	15,000.00
				<i>Total Budgeted Cost for Cake Decoration:</i>					17,400.00	26,700.00

Table 3. Summarized of Strategic Planning for Restaurant Services

No.	Skills Category	Institution	Types of training	Training Schedules (2019)	Budgeted Financial Implications (RM)					Total Cost (RM)
					21000	25000	27000	29000	42000	
2	Restaurant Services	Community College Selayang	a. Table Booking b. Napkin Folding c. Table Setting	February	-	1,200.00	2,000.00	2,250.00	150.00	5,600.00
				March	-	900.00	600.00	2,250.00	150.00	3,900.00
				April	4,500.00	1,800.00	1,000.00	4,000.00	1,650.00	12,950.00
				May	-	1,200.00	1,000.00	2,250.00	150.00	4,600.00
				June	-	900.00	600.00	2,250.00	150.00	3,900.00
				July	4,500.00	1,800.00	1,000.00	4,000.00	1,650.00	12,950.00
				August	-	1,200.00	1,000.00	2,250.00	150.00	4,600.00
				September	-	900.00	600.00	2,250.00	150.00	3,900.00
				October	4,500.00	1,800.00	1,000.00	4,000.00	1,650.00	12,950.00
				November	4,500.00	1,800.00	1,000.00	4,000.00	1,650.00	12,950.00
				<i>Total Budgeted Cost for Restaurant Services:</i>					18,000.00	13,500.00

Table 4. Summarized of Strategic Planning for Cooking

No.	Skills Category	Institution	Types of training	Training Schedules (2019)	Budgeted Financial Implications (RM)					Total Cost (RM)
					21000	25000	27000	29000	42000	
3	Cooking	Community College Sungai Petani	Basic meat product	February	-	2,000.00	4,000.00	2,700.00	150.00	8,850.00
				March	-	1,500.00	-	2,700.00	150.00	4,350.00
				April	4,500.00	2,100.00	-	4,000.00	1,650.00	12,250.00
				May	-	2,000.00	2,500.00	2,700.00	150.00	7,350.00
				June	-	1,500.00	-	2,700.00	150.00	4,350.00
				July	4,500.00	2,100.00	-	4,000.00	1,650.00	12,250.00
				August	-	2,000.00	2,500.00	2,700.00	150.00	7,350.00
				September	-	1,500.00	-	2,700.00	150.00	4,350.00
				October	4,500.00	2,100.00	-	4,000.00	1,650.00	12,250.00
				November	4,500.00	2,100.00	-	4,000.00	1,650.00	12,250.00
Total Budgeted Cost for Cooking:					18,000.00	18,900.00	9,000.00	32,200.00	7,500.00	85,600.00

Table 5. Summarized of Strategic Planning for Photography (Outdoor)

No.	Skills Category	Institution	Types of training	Training Schedules (2019)	Budgeted Financial Implications (RM)					Total Cost (RM)
					21000	25000	27000	29000	42000	
4	Photography (Outdoor)	Polytechnic Premier Ibrahim Sultan (PIS)	Landscape Photography - new point technique/rules of third/depth of field	Dis'18 - April'19	2,161.00	-	1,958.00	-	865.00	4,984.00
				Jun'19 - Nov'19	-	-	1,478.00	-	665.00	2,143.00
				Dis'19 - April'20	2,161.00	-	1,478.00	-	865.00	4,504.00
Total Budgeted Cost for Photography (Outdoor):					4,322.00	-	4,914.00	-	2,395.00	11,631.00

Table 6. Summarized of Strategic Planning for Painting

No.	Skills Category	Institution	Types of training	Training Schedules (2019)	Budgeted Financial Implications (RM)					Total Cost (RM)
					21000	25000	27000	29000	42000	
5	Painting	Polytechnic Premier Ibrahim Sultan (PIS)	Proportion	Jan'19 - Dec'19	-	8,126.20	1,272.30	-	3,675.00	13,073.50
Total Budgeted Cost for Painting:					-	8,126.20	1,272.30	-	3,675.00	13,073.50

The types of training provided will derived from five skills category such as bakery (cake decoration), restaurant services, cooking, photography (outdoor) and painting. Training will be conducted by the coach and the signal interpreter with reference from previous "Abilympics" Competition questions. At this point, coaches or external trainers can directly deliver value-added skills to the students and not just be bound by syllabus.

Training schedules that have been prepared were depending on the different skills. Skills category like bakery (cake decoration), restaurant services and cooking need frequent training session compared to the other two skills such as photography (outdoor) and painting.

In terms of budgeted financial implications, Table 2 until Table 6 indicates that the three skills category; bakery (cake decoration), restaurant services and cooking contributes to a higher estimated total cost than photography (outdoor) and painting. Based on the summarize budgeted cost listed in Table 2 until Table 4, it can be conclude that the incentive payments for coaches or external trainers and cost of purchasing raw materials contribute more higher than cost of equipments, student allowances and etc. This is in contrast for the financial implications of photography (outdoor) and painting. Table 5 and Table 6 indicate that no provision has been made to the coaches or external trainer. However, the cost that contributes high in photography (outdoor) skill is the cost of equipments while the cost of purchasing raw materials is the highest cost in painting.

CONCLUSION

“Abilympics” is a platform for Malaysian Polytechnics and College Community disabled students to promote their talent and creativity in technical and vocational skills. It is also a collaborative effort between the government and NGO’s to promote the disabled students until they get more employment opportunities in the industry. The “Abilympics” is a place where the disabled students can develop the right skills, seize available opportunities and earn a steady income. Strategic planning is an essential part to ensure the process of Students Preparatory Training can be handled smoothly. Training that being conducted by the actual expertise, frequency of training and appropriate financial allocation according to the skills are key elements in the strategic planning. Therefore, if all the stakeholders play their role according to the strategic planning of Students Preparatory Training consistently, it may contribute to the success of the students in Russia 2021 International “Abilympics” Competition.

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