

## DETERMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY IN TAIWAN: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS USING A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL

MEICHING CHEN<sup>1</sup>, JIANSHEN CHEN<sup>2</sup> AND JUIYUAN CHU<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Business Administration

<sup>2</sup>Department of Insurance

<sup>3</sup>Department of Leisure, Recreation, and Tourism Management

Chaoyang University of Technology

Taichung County, 41349, Taiwan

{ mchen; jschen; jychu }@cyut.edu.tw

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**ABSTRACT.** *The main purpose of technical and vocational education is to cultivate personnel who have both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. The practical training experience should help students focus on their career choices. Therefore, this study surveyed the students who participated in the interactive activities of three universities of technology in 2002 and used a structural equation model to understand the determinants affecting practical training for students. The effectiveness of practical training includes the advance of professional competencies and the advance of employability. The major empirical findings of the study are as follows. Of the various determinants, the factors related to the quality of training courses, the human relationship aspect and the environment for gaining practical training, as expected, are found to have a significantly positive influence on the advance of professional competencies for students. The quality of training courses and the environment for gaining practical training have a significantly positive influence on the advance of employability for students; somewhat unexpectedly, the quality of teachers is found to have no significant influence on both.*

**Keywords:** Professional competencies, Employability, Structural equation model

**1. Introduction.** The main purpose of technical and vocational education is to cultivate personnel who have both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. It is the government's intention to strengthen the coherence and completeness of various skills and vocational courses as well as the integrated application of technical and vocational educational resources. In order to decrease the gap between students' knowledge and experience and that required by companies, an important policy of the government is to promote cooperation between industry and academia in order to strengthen the relationship between students and firms. Such a policy attaches importance to promoting cooperation between industry and academia and to training talented people to work all over the world. External opinions concerning the degree of cooperation between industry and academia could enhance the competitiveness of both industry and countries [4,11,13]. The government also plans to expand the learning environment of students from school to the work place through interactive educational activities provided by technical and vocational colleges and cooperative institutions.

The practical training offers a variety of benefits to students both for improving performance while in college and for increasing job opportunities following graduation [5,8,9,14]. The practical training experience should help students focus their career choices, hone job skills, personally focus their work values and decrease their anxiety about the search