

# Human resource development for supported employment in Malaysia

## —Verification of the job coach training program—

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### Abstract

Competent job coaches are vital human resources in implementing a national supported employment program. The supported employment implemented in Malaysia since 2012 aims to create sustainable employment for persons with disabilities (PWDs) nationwide. This research examined the job coach training approaches in Malaysia, its positive impact, challenges and areas for improvement. Job coaches that were trained are mainly practitioners from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and in-house job coaches who are supervisors and buddies of employees with disabilities in the private companies. Thematic analysis of this research included progress and impact on the development of supported employment in Malaysia; effectiveness of job coach training and additional knowledge as well as skills recommended to be taught. Certification of job coaches based on the Malaysian PWDs Job Coaching National Occupational Skills Standards was recommended to be implemented. The research concluded that though there is room for improvement in the job coach training program implemented in Malaysia, it was recorded that the job coach training in Malaysia has already impacted other countries, such as, China, Myanmar, Jordan and other Middle Eastern countries. It is therefore, crucial for the relevant authorities to further enhance the development of the job coach training in Malaysia, so that the employment for PWDs in Malaysia will progress further and that Malaysia will continue to be a model to other Asian countries on supported employment.

### 1.1 Research Objective

This paper is a sequel of a published research entitled *Development of Supported Employment in Malaysia* (Yeo S.L., H.Ogawa, et al, 2019)<sup>[1]</sup> which noted that the development of the job coach training in Malaysia, has effectively contributed to establish the policy, strategies and techniques of job coaching for PWDs in Malaysia. It has also influenced the provision

of funding system by the government. However, although 2,396 people had attended job coach training, the number of job coaches who work under the national Job Coach Service Program is relatively small in numbers. As of December 2018 (DSW 2018)<sup>[2]</sup>, only a total of 329 job coaches were involved in supporting PWDs under this program.

The Job Coach Basic Course (JCBC) is offered to

professionals including job coaches, job developers, special education teachers, staff of transition centers, and so on, similar to the experience in Japan. The JCBC offered by the DSW has become one of the eligibilities for job coaches to be paid by Job Coach Service Program for their job coaching services offered to PWDs. Besides JCBC, the Job Coach Introductory Course (JCIC), a three-day training was developed to equip employers to support PWDs at workplace.

The first objective of this research is to assess the effectiveness of job coach training for those who provide job coach services under the national Job Coach Service Program implemented by the DSW. The second objective is to get basic information to reconstruct the program according to the knowledge and skills which are needed by various type of service providers in the field of supported employment for PWDs. Finally, the third objective of this research is to discover the knowledge and skills which are needed and considered as important by participants who had completed the JCBC and are providing job coaching services.

Essentially, the key purpose of these research findings is to improve the job coach training program and to make it sustainable. The collected information will be utilized as one part of the comparison factors in the Japanese study which will be implemented in 2020-2021.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The research questions for research participants are as follows:

- i. What are the job duties of the participants who have completed JCBC or JCIC are responsible in the practice of supporting PWDs?
- ii. What are the learning points from the JCBC or JCIC that they have applied in their practice of job coaching?
- iii. What are the knowledge and skills learned that they frequently used and considered as very important?

## 2. Research Participants

The various fields of services which participants who have completed JCBC include job coaching in private sector, trainers at employment transition centers, hospitals, schools, and governmental organizations. In this research, the research participants were limited only to individuals who have completed JCBC or JCIC organized by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and are working in practical fields to support PWDs toward employment and achieve sustainable employment.

As shown in Table 1, a total of twelve research participants interviewed included, three job coaches from CBRs, three job coaches from NGOs and six in-house job coaches from private sector. Six of the job coaches from CBRs and NGOs, as well as one in-house job coach from private sector attended the JCBC. Whereas, five in-house job coaches from the private sector attended the JCIC. The industries of companies represented included retail, hospitality, fast food restaurants, manufacturing, infrastructure and properties.

Research participants from the CBRs were from smaller towns of three different states. However, research participants from NGOs were from the cities in the state of Malacca, Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Research participants from the private sector were from Petaling Jaya, Selangor or Kuala Lumpur, all located in the cities. Amongst these 12 research participants, nine attended training from year 2012 to 2015. Whereas, four attended training from year 2017 to 2019.

Nine out of twelve research participants had more than five years of experience in their respective field of service. Those from the CBRs were holding supervisor and officer roles. The roles of those from NGOs include basic staff role to executive director role. All these participants from NGOs and CBRs were involved in services for people with learning disabilities. The roles of the private sector participants were mainly HR officers and managers. Only one participant, from the infrastructure and properties field, is a full-time company job coach, while another

participant is an assistant chief steward.

Table 1 Research Participants

Participant (Pseudonym)	Occupation and Roles	Years of Service	Organisation or Company (Pseudonym)	Year Attended Job Coach Training	Job Coach Course Attended
Community Based Rehabilitation Centre (CBR)					
Ashiqin	Supervisor	16	CBR Ceria, Terengganu	2013	JCBC
Suriana	Officer	7	CBR Hebat, Penang	2014	JCBC
Maria	Officer	2.8	CBR Bintang, Kelantan	2017	JCBC
Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)					
Sue	Executive Superintendent	19	NGO BG – Sheltered Employment Centre for people with learning disabilities, Puchong, Selangor	2013	JCBC
Shanti	Executive Director	4	NGO Excel - Intervention and Training Centre for people with learning disabilities, Malacca	2014	JCBC
Yang Ling	Job Coach & Training Coordinator	2.5	NGO I Can - Self-Advocacy Society for people with learning disabilities, Petaling Jaya, Selangor	2015	JCBC
Private Companies					
Jayanti	HR Manager	19	Royal Manufacturing, Petaling Jaya, Selangor	2012	JCIC
Azizah	Department Manager	15	ABB Retail Berhad, Head Office, Subang Jaya, Selangor	2012	JCIC
Le Lian	Senior Job Coach	5	JJ Infrastructure and Properties, Petaling Jaya, Selangor	2014	JCIC
Zachary	HR Officer	5	Zess Fast Food Malaysia, Head Office, Petaling Jaya, Selangor	2015	JCIC
Maimud	HR Officer	19	Sunrise (M) Bhd, Head Office, Kuala Lumpur	2019	JCIC
Junny	Assistant Chief Steward	6	Eliz Hotel, Kuala Lumpur	2019	JCBC

### 3. Research Method

This qualitative research uses a semi-structured approach. In-depth interview was used in interviewing purposeful sampling. The research participants included representatives from the CBRs, NGOs and private companies. All names of research participants and organizations used in this research are pseudonyms. This research has also included information on how job coaches carried out their roles and responsibilities in supporting PWDs in job

placement in the open employment. Documented analysis such as studies of related policies, development of supported employment and job coaching programs are also part of the research method.

Interviews were conducted and audio recorded by three appointed researchers. Interviews recorded were transcribed. Written consent was obtained from each participant before interviews. Analysis of the research

was directed to assess the effectiveness of job coach trainings conducted in Malaysia and how it has impacted the job coaching services and employment of PWDs.

#### 4. Data Analysis

This qualitative research derived its findings from the analysis of data from relevant government agencies, studies of documents or references and interview recordings of research participants. Though this research is not a comprehensive study, the findings have significant implication and lessons on the effectiveness of job coach training conducted in Malaysia. The findings also reflect the impact of the training on the employment of PWDs, in particular those with learning disabilities.

##### 4.1 Experiences of Job Coaches from CBRs

Three job coaches from the CBRs that were interviewed had between two to six years of job coaching experience after attending the JCBC. CBRs in Malaysia are heavily funded by the DSW. The salary for the manpower and also operating cost are sponsored by the DSW. The services of a CBRs in Malaysia include early intervention program, independent living skills training, vocational training, self-advocacy training and supported employment (DSW, CBR Program 2019).

The positions of the participants from CBRs are supervisor and officers. Being the supervisor of CBR, Ashiqin has to oversee the development of her CBR in all aspects and being the officers of their respective CBR, Suriana and Maria are assigned more specific responsibilities, such as rehabilitation program, vocational training and job coaching for the teenagers and adults of their CBRs.

Program of CBRs is only half a day, from 8.30 a.m to 12.30 noon. Therefore, officially, this is the working hours of CBRs staff. However, for CBR job coaches like Ashiqin, Suriana and Maria, they have to work extra hours to support PWDs for employment especially during the intensive support period. The CBRs pay them extra allowance for job coaching

PWDs based on each individual case supported.

##### 4.1.1 The case of Ashiqin

Ashiqin, a supervisor at CBR Ceria, Terengganu has served in the CBR for 16 years. She attended JCBC in 2013. Besides attending the course, she had also attended Job Coach Follow-up Workshop in 2014 and 2017. Ashiqin's roles as a supervisor include management of the center, planning relevant activities for PWDs, preparing daily training agenda, supervising the officers and preparing reports and providing job coaching services.

According to Ashiqin, Supported Employment is, *"Firstly, supporting PWDs for employment, secondly, supporting co-workers and thirdly, to ensure sustainable employment."* She explained that the key roles of a job coach are to support PWDs and employers and also to form a natural support at the workplace to promote sustainable employment. She was able to list the steps of the process of job coaching in detail.

When asked what are the most important factors to be considered by a job coach, Ashiqin emphasized that, *"A job coach must believe that PWDs are able to work, have the abilities to communicate with employers and co-workers and the knowledge on how to carry out the duties following the process of job coaching."* She added that attitude and personality of a Job Coach is crucial in motivating PWDs to work. Continual support for the welfare of PWDs and knowledge to promote the benefits for the employer in business sense are also important, in Ashiqin's opinion.

It has been six years since Ashiqin attended job coach training. She has found the JCBC to be very effective in equipping her to be a job coach. Through the course, she has learned the knowledge, roles and skills of a job coach such as: the know how to support PWDs in employment; to be a bridge between PWDs and the employers and how to equip co-workers to support PWDs in the absence of a job coach. The training effectively taught her to understand the approaches to support PWDs for employment. She

reiterated, *“Without the course, we would not have known the process and techniques in job coaching PWDs.”*

Ashiqin has supported 16 PWDs for employment in various types of industries including farming, retail, manufacturing and restaurants. She finds satisfaction witnessing these youths with disabilities have a stable job and earning an income not only to support themselves, but, also their families. Job coaching service is very relevant, says Ashiqin: *“it ensures that PWDs are valued and their welfare is taken care of through employment.”*

To add value to the JCBC, Ashiqin proposed that more time could be given to train job coaches' communication skills, especially the skills to negotiate with employers and to promote employment for PWDs. It is not easy to convince employers. Without the skills to communicate, she thinks it would be difficult to convince the employers. Job Coaches should also be taught on the importance of grooming, she suggested, *“Job coach should have professional image to impress the employers and to convince employers on the importance of supported employment for PWDs.”*

In regards to issues and challenges faced in carrying out job coaching services at CBR, Ashiqin listed the following:

- i. Lack of confidence amongst family of PWDs that they are capable of working.
- ii. Employers also doubt the abilities of PWDs to perform and to follow company regulations.
- iii. Co-workers may have the tendency to underestimate the abilities of PWDs and might not respect them.
- iv. Lack of disabled friendly environment at workplace for PWDs.
- v. Many PWDs at CBR lack exposure and therefore, are not confident to travel by public transport, no driving license and has poor money management.

Ashiqin hopes that PWDs will have sustainable

jobs, be independent and have a family of their own in the future. She also hopes that employers will think about the welfare of PWDs and provide them equal opportunities to employment benefits such as Employee Providence Fund, Social Security Benefit and bonus, like the other employees. She wishes other employees will accept PWDs colleagues and create an inclusive environment. Last, but not least, that families will believe in the abilities and potential of PWDs.

#### 4.1.2 The case of Suriana

Suriana has served in CBR Hebat, Penang for seven years as an officer. She attended JCBC in 2014. Unlike Ashiqin, Suriana has not attended any Job Coach Follow-up Workshop. Her role as an officer of the CBR, involves conducting rehabilitation exercises for trainees with cerebral palsy and physical disabilities, preparing assessment report of the trainees, preparing individualized lesson plans for trainees, implementing income generating projects for their sheltered employment and providing job coaching services for PWDs.

In supported employment, according to Suriana, the role of a job coach is to support PWDs and employers for the employment of PWDs. Her role as a Job Coach is to provide support and monitor PWDs at workplace for at least three to six months based on the needs of individual.

Like Ashiqin, Suriana was able to remember all the steps of job coaching that was taught at the job coach training she attended. When asked what are the skills and techniques from the JCBC that she has applied, she shared that she has used the approach on assessment of PWDs. She remembered being taught that in assessment of PWDs, there is a need to meet with parents to know more about PWDs. She thinks that meeting with parents is crucial, especially for those who are not trained at CBR. This is to ensure that the candidates selected are suitable for the job offered by the employer.

Workplace assessment is another skill that Suriana

has practiced. She explained that for example, if the PWD does not like heat, not able to cope in an environment with many people, she needs to find a workplace that is more suitable. She suggested that, KFC, where there is cool environment would be an example of a suitable workplace for this PWD and PWD does not need to communicate with the customers if they are in charge of stewarding. The PWD's only duties are to clean tables and wash utensils. If they are working in the supermarket, they can be assigned jobs like arranging goods on the shelves, working in the store and organizing the trolleys.

Suriana's key roles as a job coach also include job matching, building good rapport with employers and provide intensive support at workplace during job placement. She also develops natural support by explaining to co-workers on support needed by PWDs. Follow-up sessions from time to time, is another responsibility she practices as a job coach, to provide PWDs opportunity to share about their work experience or about challenges faced. This approach will maintain a good relationship between job coach and PWDs.

When asked what are the priorities and important consideration as a job coach, Suriana emphasized that, firstly, job coach must believe that PWDs are capable of working. She explains, *"If we don't believe they can work, how are we to convince the employers?"* Secondly, assessment of PWDs is important to ensure candidate is suitable for the job. This will build confidence in employers on the abilities of PWDs. Thirdly, communication skills are important, she said, *"We must know how to convince employers to hire, especially, people with learning disabilities, since they don't have formal qualification to prove their knowledge and skills. Besides, they also have difficulties with reading and writing."* Fourthly, Suriana emphasized that job coach must be familiar on the approaches to support PWDs at workplace, she stated, *"If we ourselves are not familiar with job coaching approaches, how can we teach employers to support PWDs."* Lastly, she believes that good

attitude, motivation, compassion, presentable grooming and protecting the rights of PWDs are important characteristics of a job coach.

When asked whether the JCBC is effective and important, Suriana said, *"Without this course, we won't even know all the necessary steps to support PWDs, such as workplace assessment, job duty analysis and job matching."* She also explained how systematic instruction is especially useful for those who need repetitive experience to learn a skill. The JCBC, she commented, *"was effective and easy to understand"*.

She has supported, so far, seven PWDs from CBR and 20 others who are not from CBR, for employment. She supported another ten PWDs for employment in 2019. Four of the PWDs she supported work at a fast-food restaurant. Out of these PWDs, two has worked for three years and another has worked for five years. Three of these PWDs have learning disabilities. One of them, who has hearing impairment, worked only for a year because she has to stop work to take care of her mother. She has also supported two others who worked in hotel and supermarket. One of the PWDs she supported worked as a security guard. All three have worked for more than three years.

Suriana is happy being a job coach because she finds it to see PWDs working and becoming independent adults. Job coach services according to Suriana, *"...is very relevant. Without job coach support, how are these PWDs going to survive in the society? They develop better self-esteem and feel secure when they have a job."* Suriana recommended for job coaches to be certified to prove that they are trained and have the license to be a job coach. Employers would be more confident to work with job coaches who are certified. She also suggested to have brochures on the tax benefits for PWDs as well as for employers. It would make it easier for job coaches to explain to employers.

The issues and challenges faced by Suriana as a job

coach, are as follows:

- i. Lack of sustainability in employment for some PWDs.
- ii. PWDs lack the zeal to be independent.
- iii. The low self-esteem of PWDs that affects their confidence to face with the society.
- iv. Some parents are very anxious and lack confidence that their son or daughter with disabilities can work. Job coach needs to constantly update parents on the progress of their children at work. They also need to be advised not to approach employers directly, but to go through job coach if they have any concerns.
- v. Some PWDs need repetitive explanation and demonstration before they learn the task. If the job is too difficult, consultation with employer and job modification may be needed.

Though there are challenges, Suriana continues to serve as a job coach faithfully because Suriana hopes to see PWDs becoming successful in doing daily work, like the non-disabled, become independent and have Employee Provident Fund for their future. She is hopeful that, *“Those PWDs who have succeeded can be exemplary inspirations to other PWDs that they too can become successful in the future.”*

#### 4.1.3 The case of Maria

Maria has served in CBR Bintang, Kelantan as an officer for less than three years. She attended JCBC in 2017. Her role at the CBR besides job coaching PWDs include, conducting rehabilitation activities, independent living skills and pre vocational training. In supported employment, according to Maria, a job coach provides pre-employment training at a sheltered employment before sending PWDs to the open employment and eventually achieve sustainable employment.

Like the other two interviewees from CBRs, Maria remembers the seven steps in the job coaching process. The key roles of a job coach according to Maria, include assessment of PWDs, assessment of workplace, job duty analysis and encourage support

and commitment from parents, for example, in providing transportation and follow-up.

Maria thinks that JCBC is effective because it has increased her knowledge to support PWDs for employment. She finds the role-play during the training was effective in helping her to understand the roles of job coach better. The course helped her to learn the process of job coaching and the approaches of job coaching, such as assessment of PWDs and negotiation with employers.

The course has motivated her to support PWDs for employment. Though she has attended the course only less than three years ago, she has supported 20 PWDs for employment. The PWDs she has supported are mainly working in the café, restaurants, sundry shops, holiday resorts, nursery and homestay services. They have worked between two months to one and a half year. Her biggest satisfaction is seeing her trainees being able to earn a monthly income and work independently. Job coach services are very relevant in supporting PWDs for employment, according to Maria. She felt that JCBC organized by DSW has covered all the necessary roles to be carried out by a job coach.

The issues and challenges faced by Maria, as a job coach include:

- i. Lack of support from parents, for example in providing transportation or meeting the timing of work schedule.
- ii. Too many PWDs to support and therefore, the time allocation in monitoring the development of every PWD is affected.
- iii. Workplaces of PWDs are located in many different places, makes it difficult for job coach to manage due to time constraint.
- iv. Lack of support from co-workers – require more time to create better understanding on natural support amongst co-workers.

Maria hopes that the outcome of her job coaching services will see her PWDs being productive and sustained in employment. That they will also value their jobs and perform their best. She also hopes that they will be a source of support for their respective

family.

## 4.2 Experiences of Job Coaches from NGOs

Three job coaches from the NGOs that were interviewed had between two to six years of job coaching experience after attending the JCBC. In Malaysia, NGOs are funded by the community. The DSW may fund some project-based activities but funding from the government is limited. NGOs have to rely on fund raising from membership fees and contributions or donations from the corporates, the community and religious organizations to run their services and activities.

### 4.2.1 The case of Sue

Sue from NGO BG has served in the organization for 19 years. BG is one of the biggest NGOs in Malaysia for people with disabilities. They have eight centers located in six different states. The sheltered employment center in Puchong provides services mainly for people with learning disabilities. This center was established in 2013.

Being the executive superintendent, Sue manages and operates the program of the training center. Her responsibilities also include fund raising, organizing activities and providing vocational training for the trainees. She is also involved in recruiting volunteers and assigning volunteers various duties at the center such as, work skills, occupational therapy, basic life skills and other skills that will help trainees to be independent. Some volunteers have proper qualification, for example, their occupational therapist. This occupational therapist only visits the center once every two weeks to conduct physiotherapy, communication skills and leadership skills. The vocational training program at BG is a three-year program. After three years, job placement will be carried out for those who are ready for employment.

Sue attended JCBC in 2014. The skills that she learned from the course include workplace assessment, job matching as well as manual and jigs. She uses job coaching approaches at her center but not all the skills that were taught. She felt that the

course was too long since she already knew most of the skills that were taught during the JCBC. She attended the course more for the sake of getting a job coaching certificate.

She has placed seven PWDs for employment since 2014. Two of them work part-time, while others are in full-time job. One of them has quit, she explained, “...because he has difficulties controlling his behavior. He has ADHD and autism.”

When asked what she finds helpful from the content of the job coach training and what are some of the approaches she has applied, instead of sharing on the job coaching approaches, Sue commented, “*Actually, I find one of the weaknesses, we can claim from DSW for only 60 hours of job coaching services, even though we have done 90 hours of support. But, what will happen to them if we don't continue the support? Support needed depends on their disability.*” Sue, however, has not made any claims from DSW for the job coaching services she has offered to the seven PWDs. She explained the reason is because she does not know where to get the claim form and where to submit the form. Sue also shared her frustrations in supporting those trainees who have emotional issues. She seems to have difficulties coaching those who have emotional instability. She pointed out that the aspect on emotional support is not taught in the JCBC.

When asked if she finds job coach training effective, Sue commented, “*For me, it is a knowledge for us to add on to what we already know. Job coach training gives us the basic guide. We need to know more about learning disabilities and its condition in order to help individual with learning disabilities effectively.*”

Instead of using a work readiness assessment checklist, Sue explains that they rely only on observation, “...we do not have checklist, only by observation.” Besides, PWDs' lack of readiness for employment, Sue commented that parents' support is also very important, “*If parents are not ready to let go,*



*they will always be protective of their child and not confident that they can go out to work.”*

Sue proposed that job coach training should include practical training or on the job training. She also suggested that sharing real case studies can help participants learn more effectively, “...*After the classroom training, every participant should do one real case at NGO center assigned by organizer. Practical training will help participants to remember better.*” She also suggested to reduce tea breaks during the training.

#### 4.2.2 The case of Shanti

Shanti from NGO Excel has served four years in the organization as the Executive Director and a trainer for young adults with disabilities. Besides managing the center and conducting vocational training for these PWDs, she is also a job coach. She attended JCBC in 2014, but, she started job coaching only in December 2018, when she sent two of her trainees for employment. She only supported them for the first two weeks because they are quite well trained and able to integrate to the work system quite fast. They work in café and coffee shop. These two PWDs were trained to do Food and Beverage (F & B) services at NGO Excel center’s café and catering services. They were trained in the center for about five years before they were sent out to work.

Shanti remembers all the steps of job coaching process that she learned from the JCBC. She applies the job coaching skills in supporting these PWDs at workplace for the first two(2) weeks and gradually fades off. She also creates natural support by identifying a co-worker to be the buddy for each of the PWDs, “*I will go and survey the workplace, and then talk to the team, and discuss who can be their buddy, who can support them.*” One of Shanti’s strategies is to work closely with the parents in supporting the PWDs, she explained, “...*When PWDs have any issue, the supervisor will actually contact me..., then I will liaise with the parents to see whether they know what has affected the PWDs...*” Being the job coach, she has to observe the challenges faced

by these PWDs at the café and coffee shop, especially in their social communication skills, since they have autism. The supervisors will give Shanti feedback on the performance of these PWDs and they will discuss strategies to support them.

Shanti finds the job coach training relevant and practical, though what she learned at the training were not new to her. She thinks that the course would be more useful for those who are new to job coaching and are inexperienced. She thinks that knowing the job scope of the industry is important for effective job coaching. One of the reasons she was successful in helping these two PWDs at the F & B industry is because she herself is familiar in this industry. She knows how to ask employers the appropriate questions, how to job match and how to train PWDs more effectively at the workplace. Shanti also commented that it is important to look for the right employers who are, “*friendly and reliable.*”

So far, Shanti has not made any allowance claim from DSW for her job coaching services for PWDs because she does not have time and she is not too sure how to claim the allowance. She is also not sure if there is any time frame for making the claims.

#### 4.2.3 The case of Yang Ling

Yang Ling, a training coordinator and job coach of NGO I Can, a self-advocacy society for people with learning disabilities. She has served in the organization for two and a half years and attended JCBC in 2015, before she joined I Can. Her roles at her I Can include facilitating training, finding jobs for members of organization, job coaching members at work, project management and office administration. The project management that Yang Ling is involved in include organizing art exhibition and organizing fund raising. She is one of the facilitators for the employment transition program of I Can. The training she conducts to prepare members for employment include self-advocacy training, skills training such as information technology related skills and how to prepare resume. Besides all these duties, she is also involved in conducting Disability Equality Training

on topic related to learning disabilities, for corporate companies.

Yang Ling was not able to remember the names of all the seven steps in job coaching process though she uses these principles when practicing job coaching. She has, so far, supported four members of I Can for employment. Before she joined the JCBC, she had no experience in job coaching. Yang Ling commented, *“The training gave proper guidelines and understanding of the importance of looking for job for PWDs, however, I don’t follow the job coaching process strictly...I only need to understand the process...I need to know the important points of placing PWDs for employment. We use an individualized approach to support since every PWD is different.”*

What she finds important in job coaching include working with the family to support PWDs and knowing the attitude of the PWDs towards work. She added, *“Assessing them before placing them for employment is also important. Team assessment is practiced at I Can, whereby job coaches discuss on each case before placing the individual for employment.”*

The employment transition program at I Can ranges from five to six months for each PWD. Some of them have worked at I Can sheltered employment for several years before they join the employment transition program. Some of the basic requirements in assessment of their readiness for employment include, independent skills in traveling from home to work, abilities to understand instructions, emotionally stable and have basic communication skills, be it verbal or non-verbal. She noted that they do not have an assessment form to assess PWDs’ readiness for employment.

Yang Ling has so far made two job coaching allowance claim from DSW. However, she commented, *“I think it is not worth my time to get the RM15 per hour of job coaching support. To prepare report takes a lot of time. The effort and the reward is*

*not proportional to each other. Also partly, I did not do intensive job coaching. I just go and visit them for a while, not much of job coaching needed.”* She added, *“In our transition program, we have prepared them fairly well, especially the emotional aspect...they learn to express their feelings, and self-advocate for their needs. This is an important skill for them to sustain their job.”*

Yang Ling thinks that the job coaching approach is a guide for her. However, she thinks that the training was too long. Too much time was spent on breaks and meals in her opinion. She also finds some facilitators not inspiring, especially those without job coaching experience. In her opinion, some sessions could be shortened especially those that have notes and resource materials in the training manual. Participants could just read the printed information.

Employment transition program is important to prepare PWDs for employment, explains Yang Ling, *“When they come for class, they set goals to prepare for work. So, we intentionally pass on important values they need to have before they go out to work. So, it is quite a clear goal for our members who attends the training...our trainers, together with the family support make it happen.”*

### 4.3 Experiences of In-house Job Coaches of Companies

Six job coaches from the companies that were interviewed had between six months to seven years of job coaching experience after attending the JCIC. All six of these interviewees are involved in company in-house job coaching.

#### 4.3.1 The case of Jayanti

Jayanti has worked at Royal Manufacturing, a Japanese owned company for 19 years and her position is HR Manager. She attended the first JCIC for private sector in 2012. There are currently seven PWDs working in this company. Four of them have physical disabilities, two have visual impairment and one has learning disabilities. One of them has worked in this company for 25 years.

The JCIC, according to Jayanti has helped her improved in their job matching in their recruitment of PWDs and has opened more job opportunities for the disabled. She also finds the gradual fading and follow-up approach is good in helping their PWDs not to be too attached to the in-house job coach. Most of the PWDs in their company are already stable and independent at work. Jayanti commented, *“Two of the PWDs employees who had resigned earlier, came back to work with us again. One of them has physical disabilities and the other has multiple disabilities – physical and learning disabilities.”* One of their disabled employees is from the Return to Work Program of Social Security Organization. He became disabled due to an accident at work.

Support for their disabled employees is on-going, even for the employee who has worked for 25 years. Jayanti informed that, *“The job roles of our employees with disabilities ranges from technical to management roles. We modified their job. We promote them.”* Jayanti has sent a few staff from the production section for JCIC to prepare them to be in-house job coaches.

One of the important roles as an in-house job coach, Jayanti shared, *“...To guide PWDs in the job, like having a standard manual, that is very important. For us, it is not a problem because we have SOP (Standard of Operation) in the production line, so we don't need to do any additional manual.”* In retrospect, Jayanti commented that they need to create better awareness to improve on the social issues and to promote better acceptance amongst the colleagues. Jayanti has positive regards on the job coach trainers, *“They provide a lot of knowledge for the new job coaches.”* She hopes that the government will be able to improve on accessible transport system, especially for wheelchair users, so that more amongst them can be employed.

#### 4.3.2 The case of Azizah

Azizah, a department manager at ABB Retail Berhad, a retail chain in Malaysia, has served in this company for 15 years. She attended JCIC in 2012.

One of the key things Azizah learned at the training was to understand PWDs, the qualities as well as attitude of a job coach. She also learned skills to train them at workplace and build their confidence especially in relating with customers. Azizah thinks that job matching PWDs with the right job scope is important and sometimes job modification is necessary. She believes that giving compliments to PWDs for their achievements will motivate them to do better at work.

There were 158 PWDs employed at ABB Retail chains nationwide (DSW 2017). Amongst these employees, 63 were people with learning disabilities. Employees with other disabilities include physical disabilities (47), hearing disabilities (42) and visual disabilities (6). According to Azizah, each of the disabled employee will be assigned a supervisor and buddy to support them. Since the HR training department of this company has a job coach trainer appointed by DSW, this company conducts their own in-house job coach training for all their supervisors and buddies to equip them to support PWDs. Azizah noticed that some PWDs are very willing to learn new tasks. They are interested to do the duties that the non-disabled employees are doing. She appreciates their motivation to work. They are treated like the non-disabled employees and she helps them develop their potential. However, Azizah commented, *“Sometimes, we need to be patient with them since they are slower in learning new roles.”*

In conclusion, Azizah commented, *“The JCIC trained us to be more professional and increased our knowledge. I am very satisfied with the training and the duration of training since it was not too long. The content of the training meets the objective. The training approach was also good. I learned a lot from the training. Even though there are challenges in recruiting and retaining PWDs due to multitasking expectation, our company is still committed to hire. Awareness session and training is conducted for new HR and leaders once a year.”*

### 4.3.3 The case of Le Lian

Le Lian, a full-time senior job coach of JJ Infrastructure and Properties, has served in the company for five years. The JCIC she attended was conducted by job coach trainers of Job Coach Network Malaysia in 2014. This course was conducted only for staff of JJ Infrastructure and Properties, focusing on supporting employees on the autism spectrum. Currently, there are 18 employees on the autism spectrum working in this company and they have employed six( full-time job coaches. Besides supporting their colleagues with autism, they are also responsible in running an employment transition program at their academy for adults with autism, for white collar and professional jobs. The graduates from this academy are placed in other corporate companies known as partner companies of JJ Infrastructure and Properties. These graduates are given support by their job coaches during the job placement and follow-up support at their partner companies.

When asked what are the key learning points that Le Lian has applied at her workplace in supporting her colleagues with autism, she replied, *“The most important one would be breaking down the instructions...to simplify it, because a lot of times they are expected to just do it, assuming they understand. After this course, we learned to give instruction in a step by step or structured approach.”*

Le Lian could not remember all that she has learned, since she attended the training five years ago, but what impressed her most was the systematic instructions. She also learned job duty analysis, job modification and workplace assessment. However, she thinks that job duty analysis might work only for some of her colleagues with autism. She also shared that she learns a lot through her experience or on-the-job-training as a job coach.

When asked if there are suggestions from her on how JCIC could improve further, Le Lian commented, *“I think in general, it is quite comprehensive...on how to support.”* She however suggested, perhaps topics

such as ‘negotiation with employers’ might be useful even for in-house job coaches since they have to convince head of departments to employ PWDs. She suggested, the training could be customized to meet each company’s needs. In her company, for example, training on how to handle challenges faced by employees with autism would be useful. She proposed to have follow-up training that provides training that are more advanced to address issues faced by respective companies.

Le Lian also thinks that teaching job coaches soft skills is necessary. She gave an example, job coach needs to be aware of their own emotions and how they talk to colleagues with disabilities, *“...are they being treated with respect like the other colleagues...these are important considerations because they are also human and have feelings too. They need acceptance.”* The senior job coaches of her company conduct a one day in-house job coach training to equip the supervisors and buddies of this company and their partner companies, to support colleagues who are on the autism spectrum.

In terms of effectiveness of the training, Le Lian thinks that it will truly benefit those who have no knowledge on how to support someone with disabilities. She also affirmed that natural support that was taught at the training is very important. She suggested that it might be more useful for those who have at least one month of experience working with colleagues with disabilities before attending the training. This will help them to identify what are the ideas and lessons learned that need to be applied in their support for colleagues with disabilities. They can then apply right after the training. This will make learning more effective.

### 4.3.4 The case of Zachary

Zachary has served as a HR Officer of Zess Fast Food Malaysia for five years. He attended JCIC in 2015 with a few other colleagues. Currently, there are 212 PWDs (DSW 2019:May) employed in this fast food chain nationwide. Majority of these employees have learning disabilities, that is, 114 employees.

Employees with other disabilities include, hearing disabilities, physical disabilities, mental disabilities, visual disabilities, multiple disabilities and speech disabilities.

One valuable lesson that Zachary learned from the JCIC, is that, job coaches need to be very patient. He also learned how to prepare manual and jig for PWDs, which he has found useful and is practiced in their outlets. Zess Fast Food is a very established company. They have their own training manual in pictorial form and also in video, to teach all new staff how to perform the tasks at their outlets. After the job coach training, they realized how important it is to use these teaching manuals that they already have for PWDs. They emphasize on those areas where PWDs needs more training. The JCIC impacted the management of this company. They became more open to consider employing PWDs. Zachary explains, *“Before the training, we were not sure where to find PWDs. After the training, we have more ideas and more network. Management also became more supportive. Our team presented an action plan to our management after the JCIC. In fact, management even sent one of our HR manager to Japan to attend job coach training initiated by JICA.”*

Zachary highlighted that one of the challenges they faced is having very high turnover in their staff force. Therefore, there is a constant need to create awareness for the crew and managers of each outlet so that they know how to support PWDs at their outlets. He is impressed that in his company, the retention rate of PWDs is higher than the non-disabled employees.

Zachary explained that training for all new crews with disabilities are carried out by their own in-house job coaches, who are usually the group trainers and managers. They use their own training methods to teach PWDs in a systematic approach. The trainers who have attended the JCIC are based at the head office, so they are able to continue to teach the job coaching approach to new joiners of the company. These trainers will periodically visit and audit the

outlets to make sure that the PWDs are given the appropriate support.

Disability Equality Training helps creates better awareness, according to Zachary, especially for those who have little knowledge about PWDs. He also suggested that simulation will help people understand PWDs better. He thinks that three days training might be too long for some companies. But, for those who are really interested to learn and if the training is useful, people would not mind attending.

Overall, Zachary thinks that the JCIC is relevant and promotes supported employment. His company treats PWDs without discrimination. They would like to employ more PWDs. However, job matching is important. Due to lack of accessibility, they would find it difficult to employ people who are wheelchair users at their outlets. He explained that there are not many job opportunities for PWDs at their head office because most of the jobs there requires multitasking.

#### 4.3.5 The case of Maimud

Maimud, is a HR officer of Sunrise (M) Bhd, a leading chain of General Merchandise Stores in Malaysia. He has served in this company for 19 years. Maimud attended JCIC only in April 2019. There are currently 114 PWDs working in this retail company. Out of these employees, 43 have learning disabilities and 35 have hearing impairment. The other disabilities include physical disabilities, visual impairment and mental health condition.

When asked what has Maimud learned from the JCIC, he commented, *“I learned about the roles of job coach, the main objectives of a job coach besides being a coach to PWDs. Job coach will ensure that PWDs are not discriminated at workplace, but will receive salary, employment benefits and facilities like the non-disabled.”*

The lessons learned that Maimud finds useful and applicable in his company include assessment of PWDs through documents such as resume, profile and interview. He also commented, *“Job matching based*

*on the abilities of each individual is also useful... to ensure the PWD is suitable for the job in a selected department and that the company will minimize any loss in cost of man-power.”*

Maimud shared that he has joined the HR department three years ago. Before joining the HR department, he used to be co-workers of colleagues with disabilities. When he was transferred to HR department, he explained, *“I used my experience in working with colleagues with disabilities to conduct in-house training for staff on how to retain PWDs, how to teach them to do work, how to help them to be more confident and to trust co-workers and friends...”*

Based on the JCIC, Maimud has learned that, *“Job Coach has to first of all put himself in the shoes of PWDs in order to understand them, we will then feel what they feel...just like we need to put ourselves in the shoes of the customers in order to understand our customer.”* Maimud believes that when we have learned to understand the challenges faced by PWDs at work, we will consider improvement not only on the way we work but also on the environment, facilities and benefits for PWDs. By doing so, he believes his company can then gradually achieve its target to employ up to 2% of their work force which is 200 PWDs. Before attending the JCIC, Maimud recalled, he had little knowledge about the different types of disabilities. The course has helped him understand the different types of disabilities and how to support their needs.

Maimud suggested that besides the HR team, leaders of companies should also attend this course. He is of the opinion that if the leaders from the management level have the awareness and understanding about PWDs and job coaching approach, they will be more interested to increase the number of disabled employees. He wisely concluded that training may be good, but, implementation of supported employment is crucial – without implementation it would be meaningless.

#### 4.3.6 The case of Junny

Junny, an Assistant Chief Steward of Eliz Hotel has served six years in this hotel. He attended the JCBC in January 2019. This training was sponsored by another hotel in Kuala Lumpur for NGOs, special school teachers, parents and staff of two hotels.

There are currently nine PWDs working at Eliz Hotel. Two of them are working at the kitchen with Junny. He commented that though he had seven years of experience working with PWDs, he still finds the JCBC very useful. After attending the course, Junny has already made two job modifications for two of the PWDs that work under his supervision. He explained, *“I shifted their working place because I think it is too dangerous for them, due to the heavy traffic in the kitchen. So, I shift them to another area of work, that is safer for them, especially for one of them who has learning disabilities...I noticed he is more calm now because he is not distracted by other people.”*

Junny said that he likes the session about Jigs, however, he finds that it is not relevant for his current area of work that deals with cleaning utensils. Nevertheless, he hopes one day he can create a jig that help make the work easier for his colleagues with disabilities. Junny also explained that they have a standard work manual for their duties. To simplify the job for PWDs, they have to modify the manual. The JCBC has also taught Junny to use systematic approach in giving instructions to PWDs.

The PWDs are given workload based on their abilities. They have a HR director that understands PWDs and supports the recommendation to reduce the workload of some PWDs due to the challenges they faced as a result of their disabilities. He also finds that job matching is very important. Initially, they thought that housekeeping might be an easy job for PWDs. Based on job trial for some PWDs, they realised that housekeeping job is not easy for them since the role requires multitasking. They have to modify the job to suit their abilities.

Junny appreciates having external job coach to

provide support at the initial stage of job placement for PWDs, especially during the first week. The PWDs need time to learn the job and job coach knows how to teach them to do the work in a systematic approach. Junny finds that on-the-job-training is easier for the in-house job coaches to learn how to teach PWDs more effectively. Therefore, having external job coaches at the initial job placement of PWDs is very helpful.

## 5. Thematic Analysis

The responses to the three research questions by the research participants were examined according to thematic data analysis of each of the following sub topics, which reflect the development of supported employment in Malaysia and effectiveness of job coach training in Malaysia. Data analysis implication and recommendation will be made for each sub-topic.

### 5.1 Progress and Impact on the Development of Supported Employment in Malaysia

Supported employment was first formally introduced in Malaysia through the DSW in collaboration with JICA Malaysia, in 2007. Job Coach training through JCBC and JCIC was structured and developed by 2012. To date, 2,396 people have attended job coach training, but only 329 job coaches have supported 956 PWDs for employment from the period of 2012 to 2018, based on the Job Coach Service Program report. The number of PWDs supported for employment through this program in the absence of JICA support since 2016 to 2018 is average of 175 PWDs per year (Malaysia Department of Social Welfare, 2017, 2018, 2019)<sup>[2]</sup>.

It was noted that some PWDs who were supported by job coaches who have attended JCBC or JCIC were not captured in the record of program since some job coaches were not entitled to Job Coach Service Program allowance, such as in-house job coaches from private sectors and government agencies. There were also job coaches from NGOs, like Sue and Shanti who did not make claims from the program for the job coaching services they have given

to PWDs, due to various reasons such as time factor and uncertainty on the procedures to apply for job coaching allowance from DSW, as shared by Sue and Shanti.

The Department of Skills Development (DSD) in collaboration with DSW has established the Malaysian PWDs Job Coaching NOSS in 2017. However, though the PWDs Job Coaching NOSS has been established since 2017, to date, no assessment has been carried out yet to examine and certify practicing job coaches in Malaysia (Malaysia Department of Skills Development, 2017)<sup>[3]</sup>.

The Malaysia Special Education Division reported that approximately 4,000 students with disabilities from the Special Education Integrated Program complete secondary school and leave school, annually. Majority of these students have learning disabilities. Assuming only 10% of these students are capable of employment soon after they leave school, the number of these students that would need support for employment would be about 400 people. However, it is observed that employment transition system has yet to be established in Malaysia, to support these school leavers to enter workforce and achieve sustainable employment (Ministry of Education, 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>.

### Implications and Recommendation:

The development of supported employment in Malaysia continues to progress even after the completion of the joint projects of DSW and JICA Malaysia since 2015. The commitment of the DSW has a record of an average of 175 PWDs being supported annually for employment since 2016 to 2018, based on the job coach service program report. The number of PWDs supported by job coaches that have attended JCBC and JCIC should be higher, in view that some NGOs and private companies, like those in this research, that have provided job coaching services to PWDs, but not reported. A system of recording by all stakeholders involved in job coaching, including the private sector and government agencies, should be developed to capture the number of PWDs supported by job coaches who

have attended JCBC and JCIC.

It has been two years since the Malaysian PWDs Job Coaching NOSS was completed and approved by the DSD. The DSD and DSW are recommended to expedite the examination to certify job coaches to ensure quality job coaching is being provided to PWDs for sustainable employment. Current job coaches are not being examined on their skills and competency in job coaching before they practice job coaching. In such circumstance, the quality and standard of job coaching is not assured or monitored and the impact of job coaching might not be as good as compared to situations with job coaches who are examined and certified before they are allowed to provide job coaching services to PWDs.

To fulfil the Section 29 of Malaysia Persons with Disabilities Act, that, *Persons with disabilities shall have the right to access to employment on equal basis with persons without disabilities* (Malaysia Persons with Disabilities Act 2008:24)<sup>[5]</sup>, a structured employment transition system should be implemented, whereby, all PWDs, including all school leavers with disabilities who are ready for employment and are interested to be employed, are given an opportunity to be supported to achieve sustainable employment. Stakeholders involved, such as DSW, DSD and the Special Education Division and Ministry of Youth and Sports are recommended to collaborate to develop and implement a structured system to provide support for youths with disabilities for employment.

## 5.2 Effectiveness of Job Coach Training in Malaysia

The thematic analysis of the effectiveness of the job coach training in Malaysia will be based on the data of the three research questions and will be analyzed according to the following sub-topics:

### 5.2.1 Job duties of research participants in their practice of supporting PWDs.

The analysis on the job duties of research participants from CBRs observed that job coaching is not their specialized role or job duties. Their primary

role is to run the program of their CBRs based on their designated roles. As the Supervisor, the main responsibilities of Ashiqin are to manage and oversee all the programs at CBRs. Meeting with CBR committee and preparing report are also her core duties. Whereas, Suriana and Maria have their respective duties in rehabilitation program, independent living skills training and vocational training program. Job coaching is just one of the duties on top of their core duties in the vocational training program. However, since their core duties at the CBR centers is only half a day, they have the second half of the day to carry out their duties as a job coach.

The research participants of the NGOs are also not full-time job coaches. In fact, Sue and Shanti are in the management position as the executive superintendent and executive director, respectively. Whereas, Yang Ling, is a job coach and training coordinator. She is one of the facilitators of the Employment Transition Program of I Can. She helps in the fund raising and art exhibition projects. However, it was noted that the number of job coaching cases they have only ranges from two to seven PWDs, which is much smaller in numbers compared to those job coaches from CBRs which ranges from 16 to 27 PWDs.

The roles of the research participants from the private sector are quite specialized and related to their respective position as managers, officer, assistant chief steward and full-time job coach. Jayanti, as the HR manager of Royal Manufacturing, is overseeing the well-being of the PWDs in her company in general. She supervises the other in-house job coaches in the various departments. Since most of the PWDs in her company are already stable at work, her role is merely monitoring and making sure there every PWD is well taken care of by their in-house job coaches.

Azizah is only in charge of the PWDs in her department at ABB Retail Berhad. Since her company conducts their own in-house job coach training, all



supervisors and buddies of the PWDs are trained to support PWDs at workplace. However, there is no mention of monitoring approach on how PWDs are supported in their nationwide chain.

Le Lian, being the full-time senior job coach of JJ Infrastructure and Properties, her roles include job coaching PWDs in her company, conducting training at the Employment Transition Program at their academy and also job coaching the graduates of their academy who are placed in the partner companies. As a full-time job coach of a company, Le Lian can focus in her specialized job without having to help in fund raising and other duties outside her scope of her work like those job coaches working in CBRs and NGOs.

Zachary is one of the pioneers of Zest Fast Food Malaysia attended JCIC. He seems to be the key officers who created the awareness about supported employment in his company after the training he attended in 2015. He manages the training of in-house job coaches as well as the monitoring and audit of in-house job coaches in the outlets of this fast-food chain.

Maimud is an in-house job coach and in-house job coach trainer of Sunrise (M) Berhad. He is based at the Head Office and one of his key roles is training new joiners of the company and job coaching of PWDs in the company is one of the components of his training roles.

Junny manages the kitchen crew of Eliz Hotel. He is also the in-house job coach for the two employees with disabilities in his department.

### **Implications and Recommendation:**

Job coaches in the CBRs and NGOs are not full-time job coaches. They all have a primary role in their respective organization and job coaching is just one of the responsibilities assigned.

As cited by Yeo S.L., Ogawa H., et. al, (2019)<sup>[1]</sup>, in the U.S., 9,000 PWDs were employed with supported employment in 1986. The number grew to 140,000 by

1995. This was possible because there was an increased in the number of community rehabilitation providers offering supported employment from less than 300 in 1986 to over 3,600 by 1996. The growth in employment of PWDs was significant with the increased of services of supported employment.

In Japan, the number of PWDs supported for employment by job coaches was 3,760 people in 2008. By 2011, the number has grown to 4,334<sup>[6]</sup>. The number of employment transition center has also grown from 2,518 in year 2012 to 3,503 by 2018<sup>[7]</sup>. This situation in Japan supports the implication that the increased in number of job coaches and employment transition centers has significant impact in the number of PWDs being employed.

To increase the number of PWDs for sustainable employment, certified job coaches are needed to ensure the standard and quality of job coaching. The Certified Employment Support Professional credential system in the U.S. that was established in 2011, is a good example (ASPE, 2019)<sup>[8]</sup>.

Studies should be conducted to explore manpower and funding needed by relevant CRBs and NGOs to employ full-time and certified job coaches to enable job coaches to carry out their services in supported employment effectively. The case of JJ Infrastructure and Properties is exemplary, whereby, with full-time job coaches they could run an employment transition program for trainees on the autism spectrum and place them for professional jobs in other companies in the consistent approach. Sustainability in employment for PWDs is observed to be higher when consistent job coaching support is in place.

The research findings on the companies' in-house job coaches, showed that they are generally doing a good job in supporting PWDs of their respective company. The findings also showed some of these companies' effort in conducting their own in-house job coach training to equip co-workers to support PWDs at workplace, especially those companies with outlets nationwide, has enabled them to employ more

than one hundred PWDs.

### 5.2.2 Learning Points from the JCBC and JCIC that were Applied in Job Coaching Practices

Based on the sharing of the participants from CBRs, their duties in job coaching include supporting PWDs and also employers. They seem to remember the seven steps of job coaching approaches. They apply the job coaching process which include assessment of PWDs, assessment of workplace, negotiating with the employer, job matching, job placement support, job duty analysis, systematic instructions, negotiation with employers, creating natural support, on the job training during the initial job placement and follow-up. Ashiqin stressed that job coach must have the ability to inform employers about the benefits for employers to employ PWDs.

The three job coaches of CBRs also seem to be able to support PWDs in various types of industries, especially in retail, house-keeping and F & B. Besides working with the PWDs and employers, Suriana also finds it crucial to work with the parents of PWDs, especially if these PWDs are not trainees of CBRs. Parents may be able to provide relevant information for assessment of PWDs, which will enhance the job matching for PWDs.

Amongst the three job coaches from NGOs, Sue and Yang Ling do not seem to be able to remember the steps of the process of job coaching in detail as compared to Shanti who remembers all the seven steps. However, Sue and Yang Ling did apply some of the job coaching approaches and principles in their job coaching for PWDs. Sue applied the job coaching approach at her center as well, but not all the skills that were taught at the training. Shanti applies the job coaching skills when supporting her PWDs at workplace.

Yang Ling finds that the training does give her the guidelines and principles of job coaching, but she does not follow the steps of job coaching strictly. She explained that those PWDs whom she has given support, so far, are quite well trained at their center

and they did not require intensive support at workplace.

Sue and Shanti shared that their center provide a sheltered employment that also function like a vocational training center. Whereas, NGO I Can, has a five to six months employment transition program to prepare their members for employment. Some of those who joined the transition program were previously working at their sheltered employment. These three NGO job coaches have been supporting PWDs that were trained at their respective center before placing them for employment.

Overall, the research participants from the companies find the job coach training useful. Junny said he has learned a lot from the course even though he has seven years of experience working with colleagues with disabilities. Job matching, job modification, training manual and systematic instructions were some of the topics that they found useful and practice at their workplace.

Le Lian highlighted that natural support and negotiation skills are important even for some company in-house job coaches of large corporate companies. They need to create natural support for each department that employ PWDs and they also need to negotiate with some head of departments to offer job opportunities to PWDs. Le Lian also suggested it is important to teach job coach on how to handle challenges faced by PWDs for example people with autism are likely to have social interaction and sensory challenges. Jayanti finds the gradual fading and follow-up approach helps PWDs not to be too dependent on their in-house job coaches. Azizah and Maimud expressed that the course has helped him to understand the different types of disabilities, the challenges they faced and how to support their needs. Zachary commented that the course has also given the companies ideas where to find PWDs and how to recruit PWDs for employment. The participants from the big companies with various businesses or outlet chains, Azizah, Le Lian, Zachary and Maimud shared that in-house job coaching training are conducted by

their HR Managers or trainers for their supervisors and buddies of the departments that have employed PWDs.

#### **Implications and Recommendation:**

The CBR job coaches find the JCBC relevant and they seem to adhere to the job coaching approach closely. The higher number of PWDs supported by CBR job coaches as compared to job coaches of NGOs, could have impacted CBR job coaches' abilities to remember the approaches of job coaching and applied these approaches. It could also be due to the Job Coaching Enhancement Workshops organized by the DSW for CBR job coaches nationwide. These CBR job coaches also find working with parents of PWDs important, as taught in the assessment of PWDs during JCBC. They have also learned to understand the work environment through the workplace assessment approach.

The three job coaches from NGOs learned the various job coaching approaches, but, two of them, Sue and Yang Ling did not apply all the steps in the job coaching approach. One of the key reasons given was that, most of the PWDs they supported were given vocational training at their sheltered employment or employment transition center before placing for employment. They have better readiness for employment and thus required less intensive support at workplace, as compared to PWDs who were not given vocational training before employment.

Job coach training is found to be relevant for in-house job coaches from private companies. The job coaching approaches that are especially useful to them are job matching, job modification and training manual. In fact, the bigger companies conducted their own in-house job coach training, implying that these companies have discovered that job coaching is necessary to create sustainable employment for the PWDs that are employed by the respective companies.

#### **5.2.3 Knowledge and skills learned that were frequently used and considered as very important**

The three research participants from CBRs seem to find all the seven steps of job coaching approaches important and are applying these approaches in their job coaching of PWDs, as stated by Suriana, "*If we ourselves are not familiar with job coaching approaches, how can we to teach employers to support PWDs*". They also highlighted the importance of working with parents in supporting PWDs in their transportation and giving them motivation. The knowledge on the employment and welfare benefits for PWDs and the benefits for employers are amongst the knowledge they find important.

Shanti, one of the research participants from the NGOs seem to have applied all the steps of job coaching process. Whereas, Sue finds assessment of workplace, job matching and systematic instructions very important and for Yang Ling, assessment of PWDs and job matching are most important, since the PWDs she supported did not require intensive support at workplace. Shanti and Yang Ling also realised that working with parents is important in their practice as job coaches.

Five out of six of the research participants from companies found job matching and manual or systematic instructions useful. Though some of the companies have their own training manual, this training helps them to understand how important the training manual is for their employees with disabilities, especially those with learning disabilities. Li Lian commented that natural support and negotiation is also important and practiced by the in-house job coaches of her company. Azizah found assessment of PWDs is important and helpful in their recruitment of PWDs. Maimud thinks that understanding PWDs will help in-house job coach to be better supervisors and buddies.

#### **Implication and Recommendation:**

The research participants have generally found the training relevant though their expectations and

learning points vary. None of the research participants have found any of the seven steps of job coaching approach as not relevant, though some of the steps are more frequently used than others, depending on the needs of PWDs.

There were suggestions that the training is especially relevant for people without job coaching experience. There were also recommendations for some topics to be addressed in the training to further enhance the knowledge and skills for job coaches, which will be discussed in the following part.

### **5.3 Additional Knowledge and Skills Recommended to be Taught at the JCBC and JCIC**

The research participants from CBRs, NGOs and companies have recommended the following additional knowledge and skills to be included in the JCBC and JCIC to further equip potential job coaches.

#### **5.3.1 Recommendations for JCBC by research participants of CBRs and NGOs:**

- i. Communication skills to equip job coaches to develop more effective consultation and negotiation with employers.
- ii. Grooming skills for job coaches to develop professional image.
- iii. Knowledge and skills for job coaches to address issues and challenges faced by PWDs that have emotional instability.
- iv. Knowledge about the conditions of people with learning disabilities and the skills for job coaches to address their challenges.
- v. Good practices and sample of Employment Readiness Checklist or Vocational Aptitude Checklist for job coaches to enhance their assessment of PWDs.
- vi. Practical job coaching exposure to be part of job coach training program for participants who do not have experience in job coaching.
- vii. Information on the job opportunities and job scope of the various type of industries to help enhance job matching skills of job coaches.

- viii. Importance of employment transition program to enhance employment readiness of PWDs.
- ix. Trainers of job coach training should have experience in job coaching to be effective in conducting training and inspiring training participants.
- x. To provide clearer information on how job coaches can make allowance claims from the Job Coach Service Program of DSW and improve or simplify the procedure of making claims.

#### **5.3.2 Recommendations for JCIC by Research Participants from Companies**

- i. Soft skills training on awareness of personal emotions of in-house job coaches and skills on how to communicate with colleagues with disabilities in a respectful manner.
- ii. Negotiation skills for in-house job coaches to persuade the management or head of various departments within their company to employ PWDs.
- iii. Ideas to conduct awareness sessions for management of private companies that motivate them to create or increase employment opportunities for PWDs.
- iv. To implement minimum one month of experience working with PWDs as a prerequisite for participants who attend JCIC, to achieve better learning impact.
- v. Reduce the duration of JCIC since three days training is too long for most private companies.

### **6. Conclusion**

The research findings have met the objectives of this research. The implications from the findings of this research are relevant information for the stakeholders involved, in particular the Career Development Division of Department for the Development of Persons with Disabilities and the DSW to further improve on the measures to develop supported employment in Malaysia.

It is shown in the findings of this research, that the job coach training in Malaysia is effective, as it has impacted the growth in the number of employment for PWDs in Malaysia, especially those with learning

disabilities, including people who are on the autism spectrum. However, a more comprehensive research is needed to examine the impact of sustainable employment for PWDs in Malaysia. A quantitative research is in plan by this Japanese and Malaysian collaborative research team.

Findings on the impact of the content of job coach training in Malaysia have implied that the seven steps of job coaching approach and the information on supported employment as well as the benefits for employing PWDs covered in the existing job coach training through JCBC and JCIC, are relevant. Nevertheless, there were list of knowledge and skills that were recommended to be added to further enhance the training courses.

The knowledge and the skills that are considered important to the research participants should be further enhanced to ensure that these knowledge and skills are effectively taught in every job coach training that will be conducted in the future.

Recommendations on how the training could be further improved should be taken note of by authorities and stakeholders involved in the development of JCBC and JCIC, to ensure that the training modules are improved accordingly to further enhance future training and to make the training sustainable.

It is recommended in this research, that there should be certification of job coaches based on Malaysian PWDs Job Coaching National Occupational Skills Standards to ensure that job coaching services provided are of quality and will impact the sustainable employment of PWDs in Malaysia.

Though there is room for improvement in the job coach training program implemented in Malaysia, it was recorded that the job coach training in Malaysia has already impacted other countries, such as, China, Myanmar, Jordan and other Middle Eastern countries (JICA, 2015)<sup>[9]</sup>. It is therefore, vital for the relevant

authorities to further enhance the development of the job coach training in Malaysia, so that the employment for PWDs in Malaysia will continue to progress and that Malaysia will continue to be a model to other Asian countries on supported employment.

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