

LETTER | Why aren't holistic graduates employable?

LETTER | The sober unemployment rate was never a new headline but to remain as a normalised issue is worrying.

The vulnerable cohort targeted in this gruesome phenomenon is the fresh graduates when they step into the industry.

Over 200,000 graduates are produced from institutions of higher learning in Malaysia annually, and the **Statistics Department (DOSM)** reports that one out of five graduates remains unemployed.

The plummet in the figure of the unemployed (680,400 individuals) in early 2022 by 1.1 percent may have set a relief of fortune.

However, the DOSM's statements on aggressive augmentation from 165,200 in 2019 to 202,400 in 2020 of unemployed graduates accounting for 22.5 percent cannot be denied.

A decade ago, respondents in a survey by the Education Ministry in 2012 opinionated that the education received was inadequate to prepare for life and work challenges.

Over the years, education via the National Education Philosophy (NEP) has been prompted for a thrust to shape students/undergraduates comprehensively.

Key aspects focused on the NEP for holistic development were intellectual, physical, spiritual and emotional aspects.

The ultimate question still demands an answer. If the NEP is directed to produce holistic individuals taking shape into holistic fresh graduates, how is it possible for the unemployment rate among fresh graduates to still remain unsolved?

The percentage contribution of unemployed fresh graduates is 50 percent from public universities and 47 percent from private universities.

Would this be due to an imbalance of growth by exaggerating the importance of academic endeavours in the NEP while partially having eyes closed for the other three key aspects?

With reference to the intellectual approach in the NEP, academic achievement alone should not be the definition of a top student but the all-encompassing development he/she has built.

Intellectual abilities may be a qualifying criterion but should never be the determining factor in securing a job. Overindulgence in academic performance has ultimately influenced the norm of displaying the number of As or grades as a measurement of excellence.

The announcement of the abolishment of Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) last year and Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (PT3) recently by Senior Education Minister Radzi Jidin has sparked controversial debates on the direction of the education system of the country.

On the flip coin, perhaps this strategy could be designed as a pioneering approach toward hindering the over prioritisation of academic excellence that is often utilised to prove a student's worth within the discourse of Pendidikan Abad Ke-21.

In the execution, however, precautions and relevant measures have to be instilled to address the possible consequence of the upcoming generation not understanding the value of the academic approach at all upon reaching the last year of secondary education for Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (SPM).

When indulging in undergraduate years, possible obstacles may incur in adapting to the frequent exam/test assessments in the university, buffering the road towards a holistic development.

The production of modest all-rounders as graduates is vital.

Besides, another prominent root cause of unemployment lingers around the fine line between communication and leadership skill inadequacy.

The scarcity of these skills has been evident widely among fresh graduates when being sought as potential employees.

The importance of communication and leadership skills should be cultivated not just as proposals but in vigorous execution.

These skills should be incorporated within the four NEP elements to unleash the potential of holistic graduates who are employable parallel to the 2015-2025 Malaysia Education Development Plan (Higher Education).

Leadership skills via training in tertiary education institutes should be instilled among undergraduates with strong niche demand for integrity as a proactive strategy upon graduation.

Communication skills should opt for effective delivery of information to outline basic soft skills among fresh graduates.

In other words, holistic students idealised by the NEP should also closely accommodate the employability requirement with the contemporaneous worldly matters.

In the long run, the nation will be able to afford the luxury to witness the upcoming generation gripping a bachelor's degree scroll as holistic employable graduates.

These fresh graduates will fulfil the faith of recovering from the unemployment crisis and the pleasant economic convalescence.

They would also be the best resource to direct the trail of the country for credible leadership.

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