

Getting hired

“WILL I have a job after graduating?” is a question that plagues the minds of many of today’s youths as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to ravage the shrinking job market.

As of June this year, there were 768,700 unemployed individuals, with a national unemployment rate of 4.8%.

In addition, Statistics Department data showed that almost 2.1 million individuals were affected by skills-related underemployment in the first quarter of the year.

While the ramp-up in vaccinations offers a glimmer of hope for graduates entering the workforce, it is unlikely that the jobs of today will continue to exist tomorrow with technological disruptions brought on by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0).

As various jobs have, and will continue to, become obsolete, future jobseekers need a strong grasp of digital skills to remain relevant in the workforce.

And, fresh graduates must be ready to face intense competition as employers will be on the hunt for the best talents – in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude – when the economy recovers.

If the pandemic has taught us one thing, it is that digitalisation is here to stay and with it, a need to have strong soft skills to not only secure a job, but to thrive in it.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said in the current labour market, employability is highly dependent on whether the skills match the demands of the industry – much more than ever before.

“Employers will choose the best candidates and this means those who have the right combination of knowledge, skills and attributes that they are searching for.

“To land a job, what is most important are work experience, commitment, and having the right skills and attitude.

“As for fresh graduates, they must be willing to seek jobs which are outside their fields of study,” he told StarEdu.

Possessing a bachelor’s degree and technical knowledge is no longer enough, he stressed, as employers are also looking for a solid set of soft skills – with good communication a priority.

Locally, there was a shift in demand from low-skilled to semi-skilled and skilled workers, as the percentage of low-skilled workers decreased from 21.5% in 2010 to 15% in 2019.

This, he said, was based on Malaysia’s labour market from 2010 to 2019.

Skilled workers increased by 6% from 23.4% in 2010 to 29.4% in 2019.

TalentCorp's Critical Occupations List 2019/2020 revealed that one of the top reasons certain jobs are hard to fill is that candidates lack communication and technical skills.

The report listed 58 occupations that are skilled, sought-after and strategic across 18 sectors in Malaysia.

Of the listed occupations, 31 included entry-level positions.

"There is a need to address the shortage of employees with the 'right skills' as there is a mismatch in demand and supply across all industries.

"Moving towards IR4.0, the demand for skilled workers will be greater as industries move up the value chain," Syed Hussain said.

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