

## Private universities keeping up with current demands

IT WAS reported that only 170,000 Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) 2019 candidates were interested in furthering their studies and joining the workforce.

As many as 390,000 (72.1%) had no interest in pursuing higher education, which were deemed mundane and outdated, according to the **Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM)**.

Instead, they planned on making a living as social media influencers, e-hailing car drivers, or food delivery riders, which give the impression of freedom and guaranteed high pay without college or university certificates.

This phenomenon has opened up opportunities for private universities to aggressively market themselves by offering soft courses that would not only be attractive to the younger generation, but also guarantee excellent results and fulfil industry needs.

Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation (APU) CEO Datuk Parmjit Singh said while ensuring long-term employability and future-proof careers for the graduates, higher education is also meant to open up a world of new ideas, intellectual growth, social, sporting and cultural activities, new adventures and the building of lifelong friendships.

He also noted that universities should nurture school leavers into professionals with enduring skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, effective collaboration and communication, together with tech skills to meet the technological future.

At APU, he said, the aim is to produce a future-proof global workforce, where graduates will be industry-ready and capable to remain competitive locally and globally.

With this mission, APU offers programmes with technology as the core in most areas. Through the diverse industry-related programmes offered at APU, its graduates are prepared for rewarding careers in computing and technology; multimedia and games development; financial technology (fintech); cyber security; digital marketing; industrial design; business management; e-business; and media, among others.

“Our programmes are designed to elevate entrepreneurial acumen, imparting skills to underpin our graduates’ abilities to secure employment across a range of industries and specialisms.

“Furthermore, in an increasingly complex environment, there is a growing need for graduates to be multi-taskers, able to strategise, problem-solve, and interpret data and situations to find creative solutions to inter-disciplinary problems,” he told The Malaysian Reserve (TMR).

On its business strategy, Parmjit said APU is a tech-based private university which produces graduates who are equipped with practical skills and knowledge for the industry, which is very much sought-after these days.

“Our client is the industry, so we focus on producing graduates that the industry is demanding for. The employers are not just seeking graduates with qualifications, but graduates who have the experience and ability to contribute effectively to the workplace with industry-relevant skills.

“We want to nurture school leavers into professionals with high employability track records,” he further added.

The programmes offered at APU are also technology-driven in all fields, ensuring long-term employability and future-proof careers in the age of IR4.0, post- Covid-19 and beyond.

“Technology will play an even more important role in this post-pandemic era with new waves of technological disruptions and the emergence of advanced technologies that will replace routine and mundane jobs.”

Meanwhile, City University Malaysia’s marketing communication department said it has seen increased mobility, changing demographics and economic growth in regions outside Malaysia.

As such, it added, there is a need to address a range of global challenges in areas such as technology mobility, health, fake information and security.

“The expansion and growth of digitalisation, increasing internationalisation and the introduction of new technologies all affect markets, regulation and public expenditure, including on research and education.

“To stay relevant, City University has developed innovative programmes ranging from foundation to the doctorate level, which are recognised by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and other professional bodies. Besides that, City University also offers short courses that are tailored specifically to the industry needs via micro credential mode,” it told TMR in a written response.

The university also prioritises collaboration and has established a range of partnerships in various areas, which allows it to offer expertise to governments and companies, to arrange funding for projects and work with international organisations.

“The university is always interested in furthering its collaboration and development activities, as well as providing new and exciting opportunities for its students and staff.

“We actively take part in various projects and networks around the region with various universities and institutions which have excellent histories. The aim is to capitalise on joint complementary strengths in providing innovative education to our students,” it added.

In line with the overall ambition of enhancing the quality of teaching, the university has developed and disseminated the use of digital teaching methods that underpin the quality of teaching, increase learning intensity and help free up time for increased interaction between academic staff and students.

It also prioritises continuing education and professional studies for working adults who might lack formal academic qualifications.

As part of its corporate social responsibility effort, City University grants scholarships every year to the needy and outstanding students to assist them in realising their academic aspirations.

For Yelaoshr Education College (YEC), the institution fully focuses on cultivating future-proof talents in the more traditional education sector, by training their ability to think outside the box and be solution-oriented.

"I believe it is not an either/ or situation. We live in this era where transformation is key and soft skills are important because it helps build relationships and solve problems, so you can make positive contributions in any situation. We call it the 21st-century skills which include creativity, communication, critical thinking and collaboration," said David Yap, founder and CEO of YEC, to TMR.

"I think it is equally crucial to offer and promote soft programmes or courses cohesively to produce excellent talents. If we instil this spirit to look beyond the structure with these skills, the youth will be able to overcome any obstacles and adapt to any unprecedented situation.

"For instance, 70% to 80% of the pre-school education academic diplomas obtained by traditional institutions are mainly theoretical and less practical, while our programmes are 70% to 80% practical. With hands-on experiences, we build a positive mindset of thinking beyond just facts."

Yap said that different fields require different programmes, which will help students grow and be industry ready.

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