

Technical grads have higher chance of securing jobs than those with general degrees: MEF

PETALING JAYA: Graduates with a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) qualification have a higher chance of securing jobs compared with those holding general degrees, said Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman.

Hence, he urged parents and society to change their views on youths taking up TVET courses.

“Enrolling in an academic course in university is seen as a success symbol. But in reality, general degrees have less value than skills certifications,” Syed Hussain said.

In a report last month, the Higher Education Ministry said there were 197,400 unemployed graduates in Malaysia as of 2021, with the highest number having degrees in social sciences, business and law.

Meanwhile, the **Statistics Department Labour Market Review for First Quarter 2022** said skills-related underemployment showed a 36.9% mismatch between occupations and qualifications.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Noraini Ahmad said recently that the government is targeting to have at least 55% of Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia holders taking up TVET courses by 2025.

Syed Hussain said the government’s move will help address the challenges posed by the skills shortage.

However, he said for now, TVET suffers from the negative perception that it is inferior to university degrees and caters to students with lower academic aptitude, which is untrue.

“This may have resulted in the majority of TVET intakes being students who are less academically inclined, thus propagating the same perception to industry players who employ TVET graduates.”

He said to promote TVET among youths, it has to be perceived positively as a favourable career path that students will prefer, rather than being forced to enrol in it due to poor academic performance.

“TVET modules focus on work-based learning and acquisition of practical skills, wherein trainees participate in practical training at the workplace in the form of apprenticeships and internships.

“TVET graduates can readily obtain jobs as they are more industry-ready and meet industry requirements,” he said.

Syed Hussain stressed for Malaysia to remain competitive, there is a need to shift towards higher-end manufacturing processes, which call for the development of a future-ready workforce.

“The establishment of sector-specific skills councils and the adoption of apprenticeship programmes through the TVET system would ensure that the skills of graduates meet the needs of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0) and the digitalisation process.”

For Malaysia to position itself for the rapidly emerging IR4.0, it will need a well-trained technical workforce with skill-sets that are needed in the new economy.

TVET programmes are a key mechanism for bolstering Malaysia's human capital in its move to become a more inclusive, innovation-driven economy, Syed Hussain said.

He pointed out that the shortage of skilled labour in Malaysia, exacerbated by the acceleration of technological transformation during the pandemic, is hampering business recovery as industries scramble to meet pent-up demands and new supply chain obligations.

"Industries are relying more than ever on TVET graduates as their skills are required across various industries to support operations requiring automation and technological transformation.

"Industry players are confident in the value of TVET qualifications translating into higher work productivity, thus employers are willing to pay premium salaries to TVET graduates."

He called for a nationwide campaign to promote TVET as an "education of choice" to promote interest in its courses, adding that official recognition of high-value TVET occupations would help its graduates secure high-paying jobs.

"To progress with industrial advancements, we need skilled talents to manage advanced technologies.

"Equal opportunity should also be given to TVET graduates to progress to senior management levels, not only in the factory environment but also in general management. This will help boost self-confidence among skills graduates.

"More scholarships should be provided to technical institutions than universities. Industrial training should be institutionalised and proper allowances and benefits must be implemented," Syed Hussain added.

TVET modules focus on work-based learning and acquisition of practical skills. – Bernamapix

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