

Poor English still an issue among local grads

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Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Shamsuddin Bardan says employers will prefer overseas graduates.



The Malaysian Employers Federation says overseas graduates are more exposed to international culture and experience, which employers value. (File pic)

PETALING JAYA: Graduates from overseas universities still have an edge over local degree holders as communication skills remain an issue with many who graduate from Malaysian varsities, according to the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said students trained in English-speaking countries generally have a better command of English and communication skills.

“They also have an advantage as they are more exposed to international culture and knowledge. So employers would obviously choose them for these skills.

“These are the kind of things that our local graduates lack,” he told FMT.

He was commenting on a survey which showed overseas graduates tend to have higher-paying jobs and are employed in more senior positions.

Heriot-Watt University Malaysia head of marketing and student recruitment Sarah Jane Tate said the survey of international graduates, by the UK Council for Industry and Higher Education, concluded that international businesses are increasingly seeking graduates who have global awareness.

Shamsuddin said even people in higher management lacked proficiency in English.

Adding that the standard was very low, he said even heads of departments might not be able to pass an English test.

“When you talk about business requirements, it’s not only about those who have technical knowledge. They also need to be able to communicate with clients.”

In June, the federal government announced that it would introduce an English language competency test for senior civil servants to improve the quality of public service in the country.

Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Cabinet members had stressed the importance of the English language and the need for civil servants, especially senior-ranking officials, to be proficient in it.

JobStreet Malaysia country manager Gan Bock Herm said a survey it did on why local graduates were not employed also showed that they were handicapped by their poor command of the English language and bad communication skills.

However, Gan said work experience had a bigger influence on employers’ preferences than the university they graduated from.

“Some 71% of them indicated that they would prefer to hire graduates with some form of work experience. They also look at internship experience.

“More than half of these employers indicated they had no preference for the educational institution these graduates came from.”