

Paper qualifications no longer enough, say experts

By **Hakimie A.mrie Hisamudin** - October 20, 2020 8:15 AM



Universities have a bigger role than just producing a labour force, says an economist.

PETALING JAYA: The job market looks beyond paper qualifications in hiring fresh graduates, especially for the professional sectors, says an economist and the head of the country's largest employer group.

This comes after a Singapore think tank, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, said the labour market in Malaysia has failed to produce jobs requiring skills that match qualifications despite Malaysia's youth continually achieving higher education levels.

It said many young people work in jobs for which they are overqualified, are likely to earn less than they otherwise could, and do not make the most of their productive potential.

Explaining the job market phenomenon, economist Yeah Kim Leng of Sunway University said while completing tertiary-level education to show academic

proWess is still necessary, it is not sufficient for the knowledge-intensive job market.

“The paper qualifications signal to employers that the job seeker is equipped with a body of theoretical and applied knowledge related to the particular field of study,” he said.

“However, the effectiveness and productivity of the employee with paper qualifications will vary according to the quality of education and industry relevance of the curriculum, as well as individual attributes such as ambition, learning and ability to adapt,” Yeah told FMT.

However, he said it was not fair to assume the only role of universities was to produce a labour force.

As bastions of higher education, universities play a major role in providing education, exposing young people to real-world issues, shaping their mentality, nurturing responsible, progressive leaders and citizens for the nation to achieve sustainable progress and advancement in all aspects of humanity, he said.



Yeah Kim Leng.

He added higher education institutions could also bring a change to the industry, ending the mismatch jobs problem.

“Universities should explore new courses relevant to the industry. Universities should also nurture a pool of technologists, scientists, researchers, inventors, and entrepreneurs who are able to advance the frontier of knowledge and innovations in both the industry and academic spheres.

“After all, this increasing economic complexity can only come about through investment in technology, research and innovations, matched with the human capital and talents supplied by the tertiary education system,” he said.

Malaysian Employers Federation executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said there should be cross collaboration between universities and industry.

“Academic teaching staff should undergo attachments with industry and the same for industry staff who should share their working experience at educational institutions.



Shamsuddin Bardan.

“The collaborations would cause educational institutions to be informed on the latest trends in the industry and industry’s expectations on talent required,” he said.

Shamsuddin added that graduates must also possess the right attitudes in order for them to be employed.

“They have to be digital savvy and must be able to accept new forms of employment relationships such as in the gig economy and e-commerce platforms,” he said.