

Graduates face skills mismatch and job shortages



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Over 250,000 graduates are produced at both degree and diploma levels, but jobs for them are less than 100,000

by NUR HAZIQAH A MALEK/ pic by MUHD AMIN NAHARUL

SKILL mismatches among graduates and the rapid market needs are rampant despite career opportunities being generated continuously due to industrial changes and the upcoming revolutions.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) ED Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said every year, over 250,000 graduates are produced at both degree and diploma levels, but jobs for them are less than 100,000.

“There are not enough new jobs being created to absorb all the fresh graduates and this phenomenon has been going on for some time, resulting in a large number of unemployed graduates,” he told *The Malaysian Reserve*.

The statistics from January to August 2019 showed 270,288 active registrants looking for jobs, of which 197,193 are graduates and 73,095 non-graduates.

As for job vacancies, there are 50,326 positions for graduates and 642,979 job vacancies for non-graduates in both public and private sectors.

During the whole of last year, there were 168,677 registrants on the website, made up of 47,073 graduates and 121,604 non-graduates.

Shamsuddin added that there are three main challenges surrounding unemployed graduates.

“The three main challenges are the need of quality skills-based and job-relevant training; updated curricula and soft skills, especially English proficiency; and the gap between what the institutions produce and what the industry needs, in technical and soft skills.

“There is also the need to invest in human capital through reskilling and upskilling work forces which requires a transformation in education,” he said.

The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs research manager Lau Zheng Zhou said the mismatch is not only caused by the lag in education due to regulations, but also the rapid industrial changes.

“Technology is getting better, hence, with the rapid industrial changes, jobs will require us to work alongside them like robots and our skills will also slowly become obsolete.

“Work nowadays can be performed by technology and because of that, we need to upskill ourselves, and those who are unemployed will have to work and develop their skills to become more marketable,” he said.

He added that, while the issue may lay on education taking time to adapt to the industry, students should also take on part-time jobs in order to understand what the market needs, and work towards it.

“Constant upgrading and upskilling will help one get the most jobs and move forward because industrial changes are inevitable,” he said.

Supporting the sentiment, Shamsuddin said there is an urgent need for graduates themselves to improve their marketability by taking up part-time jobs to ensure they have workplace experience.

“The graduates need to be more flexible and equip themselves with multiple skills that may not be connected with their studies so that they can always be relevant to the job market requirements,” he said.

He suggested a few approaches to the issues as well, stating that cross collaborations should be implemented.

“Academic teaching staff should undergo attachments with the industry and the industry staff should be embedded at educational institutions. Graduates should also visit industries and collaborate with educational institutions to inform on the latest trends and expectations on the talents required.

“Industries should also fund technology labs, donate or sell used equipment, or allow access to current equipment being used by companies to establish a structured development programme for fresh graduates to fast track their career growth,” he said.