

Employers and job agencies worried

KUALA LUMPUR: The teaching of Mathematics and Science in English should have been allowed to run for at least 15 years before a decision was made on its success or failure, the Malaysian Employers Federation said.

MEF executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said it was too early to gauge the effectiveness of the policy, adding that examination results alone were not a good indicator.

"We should have waited to see the full cycle of students graduating to gauge its effectiveness."

He said MEF conducted a survey in 1999 among its members where 43.6 per cent of the respondents said they had staff with problems in written and communication skills.

"In 2003, we did another survey, which indicated that the problem had increased, with 54 per cent of respondents complaining of the same," he said, adding that most graduates lacked the ability to converse in English.

Shamsuddin said the MEF was waiting for the policy to run for at least 15 years before conducting another survey to gauge its effectiveness.

Recruitment agency People's Source Malaysia chief executive officer Shahul Hameed Dawood said it was sad that bright graduates were unable to land

the right jobs due to their poor command of English.

"It is worrying that out of the 10 unemployed graduates, seven have communication problems."

Shahul cited an example where two weeks ago at a job opening for call centres, only eight out of 80 applicants were selected as the others had fared badly in English.

"Malaysia is becoming a call centre hub but if this continues, we may lose out."

"The government was doing fine with the teaching of the two subjects in English. The extra hours of English and more English teachers should have been used to enhance the policy, not reverting it."

Executive WorkPlace International country manager Tan Aik Seng said that not long ago, Malaysia's level of English was on par with that of Singapore.

"But now, we come in second to them. Thailand, on the other hand, is rapidly gaining advantage in terms of the English language."

Tan said in the past, one of the attraction of foreign companies setting up their factories in Malaysia was because English was widely used.

As such, these companies did not have to translate their communications, tech-

nical manuals, operation manuals and other materials into Malay.

"We are losing this advantage as well. Our ability to comprehend and understand what these foreigners want us to do and perform have been a major advantage," Tan said.

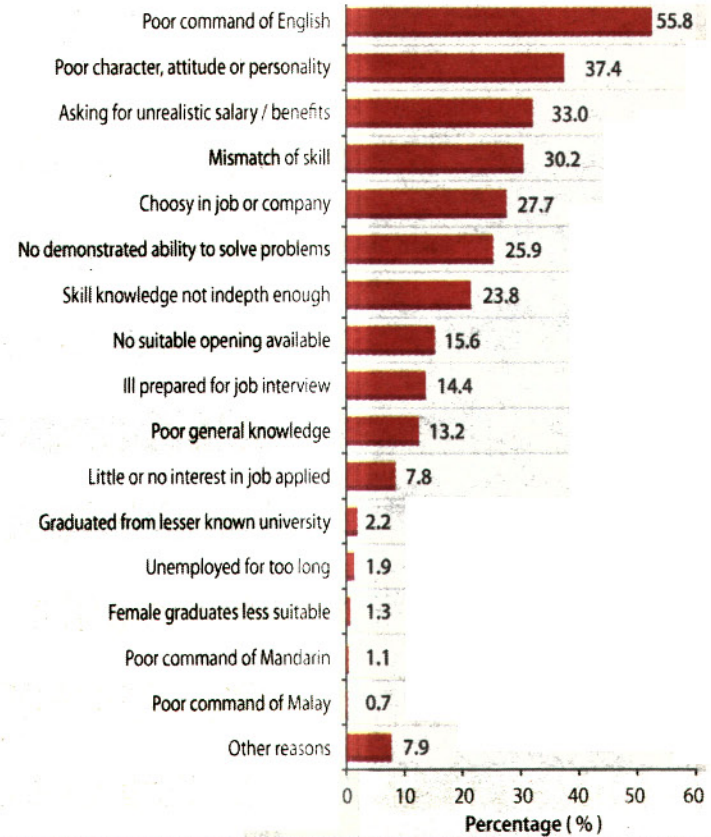
"I was told that in some teleconferences between Malaysian engineers and those in Western countries, the locals here could not follow the discussion because the Westerners were speaking in English."

Simon Si, head of regional communications at Jobstreet.com, said there was general dissatisfaction by employers on the communication skills of job candidates, especially among fresh graduates.

"The poor communication skill are often attributed to the poor command of spoken English. As many interviews are conducted in English, a candidate lacking this language skill is already in disadvantage," he said.

A survey done by Jobstreet.com among 3,000 employers more than a year ago revealed that 56 per cent of those polled said the main stumbling block when hiring fresh graduates was their poor command of English. In contrast only 0.7 per cent cited poor command of Malay as a difficulty in hiring.

PROBLEMS FACED BY EMPLOYERS IN HIRING FRESH GRADUATES



Source: Jobstreet.com