

'Hiring postgrads is tough due to lack of capital'

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PETALING JAYA: Industry experts say hiring postgraduates is a challenge as they may lack the experience and skills required by potential employers, while also expecting a higher salary matching their qualifications.

Companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), also said they had only just started on their post-Covid-19 recovery phase, and as such did not have much capital to expand on highly skilled

positions.

The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman (*pic*) said that with the existing jobs available, the level of salaries on offer might not meet the expectations of PhD and Master's degrees graduates.

"Postgraduate students expect to be hired at higher pay but employers hire employees based on their need and the position available, which may not be based on the level of degree the applicants possesses.

"There are PhD or Master's degree holders who are willing to work outside their field of study and with lower pay in order to be hired but most of such degree holders wish to be employed in the field of their studies and specialisation," he said.

According to the Statistics Department, less than a quarter of the jobs created in 2022 were designed for skilled employees (28%), with the majority or 63.1% for semi-skilled workers, and the remaining 8.9% for low-skilled workers.

"More than one-third of tertiary educated workers are employed in semi-skilled and low-skilled occupations.

"In the fourth quarter of 2022, the number of persons in skill-related underemployment grew by 2.9% or 53,100 to 1.89 million persons compared to the same quarter in the previous year," the department said.

There were 8.75 million jobs in the economic sector in Q4 2022, with 62.3% involving the semi-skilled category, while 24.9% involved skilled jobs and 12.8% were of low-skilled job.

A total of 192,400 vacancies were available, with 55.1% involving semi-skilled jobs, 25.3% skilled jobs and 12.8% of low-skilled jobs.

Syed Hussain said most of the PhD and Master's degree programmes in the country were research-based but Malaysia was not yet a research-based country.

"We need to develop more research centres in Malaysia either on our own or by teaming up with international research centres. This is where we can create more employment opportunities for PhD holders.

"There are limited job opportunities in the private sector for PhD graduates. In Malaysia, PhD graduates are generally employed in academic institutions as lecturers and in researchers' institutions.

"PhD graduates in the fields of natural sciences, mathematics and statistics recorded the lowest employment rate in 2022 at 19.6%," he said.

To address the job mismatch, Syed Hussain said the country needed to relook the syllabus of PhDs and make it more flexible so that they could have options to join other industries or jobs.