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'Have diverse courses in TVET plan'

POLICY REVISION

# 'HAVE DIVERSE COURSES IN TVET PLAN'

This will erase idea that vocational education is a last resort for poor academic performers

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**A** NEW Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy should include a diverse range of courses, integrate entrepreneurship and create financially rewarding careers.

This, experts said, would erase perceptions that vocational education was a last resort for poor academic performers and dropouts.

Dr Anuar Ahmad, an education expert from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Centre of Community Education and Well-being, said Malaysia must place stronger emphasis on TVET education to be on a par with major economies.

"TVET was introduced as an alternate pathway for students who are not academically inclined.

The older generation perceived academic-based careers as more prestigious and financially rewarding.

"The situation has changed. Most developed countries are pushing for higher student enrolment in TVET courses.

"Germany seeks to get at least 80 per cent of its students to receive vocational and technical training. In South Korea, almost 60 per cent of its workforce come from the TVET stream.

"Our TVET education system should be revamped to include diverse courses, such as coding and software programming, to attract the younger generation.

"Secondly, the government must set a clear career pathway for TVET graduates.

"Their learning should not stop at the diploma level. They should get options to boost their expertise up to the doctorate level.

"Thirdly, TVET jobs must offer attractive remuneration packages.

"Most TVET workers are paid relatively low salaries," he told the *New Straits Times*.

The new policy, he said, should integrate entrepreneurship ele-

ments into TVET courses as young entrepreneurs with a TVET background to create more jobs.

Professor Dr Muhammad Sukri Saud, a TVET expert from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, urged the government to run more TVET outreach programmes in rural areas.

"Most parents believe that a skill-based profession is a risky career option that suits only people who work in the private sector and industries.

"Rural folks, especially, prefer to work in the public sector as it is safer compared with the private sector. This mentality can be changed by advocating to them TVET career prospects.

"The new policy should ensure that facilities at learning institutions are on a par with industry standards.

"Otherwise, our graduates' skills will fall short from meeting industry demands."

These suggestions came after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, on March 6, called on the Higher Education Ministry to introduce a new TVET policy to rebrand the stream into a more appealing pathway.

He said students should be al-

lowed to opt for the TVET stream in Form One, instead of starting from Form Four.

GiatMara chairman Datuk Abdul Halim Mansor supported the idea as he believed that students should be exposed to vocational education from early on.

"Students spend their first six years in primary school to learn and master basic academic skills.

"In secondary schools, they should be taught to apply these through technical and vocational training.

"The government should make it compulsory for school-leavers after Form Five to undergo vocational training and get basic technical skills for at least six months.

"It should also provide third-level vocational certification on an on-the-job basis for TVET workers.

"Despite having a strong working experience, most are at risk of getting laid off during retrenchments because they lack certifications.

"Even if they get a new job, they are forced to start from scratch with a new minimum salary. This must be remedied."

UTM Social Sciences and Hu-

manities Faculty dean Professor Dr Zaidatun Tasir said the new policy must include fresh knowledge, such as artificial intelligence (AI), to meet industrial demands related to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0).

Zaidatun said AI had shifted sectors from focusing on task-based jobs to human-centred task-based jobs.

"This will necessitate inter-disciplinary, if not trans-disciplinary, learning, research and innovation. The Internet of Things, Industrial Internet of Things, cyber-physical systems, smart manufacturing and factories, cloud computing, cognitive computing, and artificial intelligence are among the knowledge necessary for IR4.0.

"These must be incorporated into the TVET curriculum to produce a future-ready workforce."

Vocational college student Badlin Rudayini Baharuddin, 19, who is pursuing an administrative secretarial course, hoped to benefit from more practical training sessions under the new policy.

Badlin said there could be more online practical sessions so future graduates could thrive in a work-from-home lifestyle.



Dr Anuar Ahmad



Datuk Abdul Halim Mansor