

THE STAR
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Second chance and continuity with TVET

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EVERY year after the release of the SPM examination results, there would be much publicity on outstanding students who fail to secure the Public Service Department's scholarships or places at local public universities. Comparatively, there appears to be little public awareness on the plight of those who fail in their academic pursuit.

A considerable number of them, including drop-outs who failed to meet academic requirements for further study or due to financial difficulty, opt for the job market. Many of these youths who have not acquired any skill/qualification after leaving school often realise later on the value of a post-secondary qualification for their career advancement/development but often find that they do not qualify for admission into the government training institutes.

At a time when the Government is calling for the workforce and SMEs to scale up their human resource capability, further liberalisation of the admission criteria into TVET institutes is necessary.

There are many late learners/

starters who, if given a chance, can add value to their career and the national economy. They should be given a second chance.

Work experience acquired especially in the relevant fields should be suffice to substitute for academic credentials. There should also be more openings for skill-training leading to certification to reset the career of those trapped in mundane jobs with few opportunities for career advancement.

Most of the Malaysian TVET institutes award certifications up to Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia (SKM) Level 2 or 3. To progress with time, especially when Malaysia's industries are moving to higher skill levels, it is essential to conduct more courses up to Level 4 and 5 to upgrade the workforce. Level 5, which is awarded at higher diploma level, is equivalent to a bachelor's degree in the academic

stream. In fact, the certification could be further taken to a higher level, that of master craftsmanship just like in the German dual vocational training system. This is equivalent to a master's degree in the academic stream. This will also incentivize more youth to pursue the technical and vocational education route.

It is essential that the TVET pathway be made easier for individuals to pursue at different times of their career. Perhaps we can envisage the scenario based on the famous slogan of AirAsia: "Now Everyone can Study". Further upscaling of our workforce is critical in fuelling the human resource development of our industries, especially the SMEs, to ensure their competitiveness in the globalised world.

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