It’s not just the money

Malaysian youths want careers that make a difference

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A NEW breed of talents are entering the job market and they seem meaningful careers that can lead to a better tomorrow.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said it’s a trend among fresh graduates to join green and socially responsible companies. Millennials, he said, see themselves as socially responsible individuals with the potential to change the world.

Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (Maputo) president Datuk Dr Partipit Singh said its members have also noted a similar trend – particularly the post-millennial generation of students who are now entering university and joining the workforce.

“They have a greater sense of keenness to make a difference and to make an impact.

“We see an increasing number of students joining social enterprises where they can build careers while using their skills to help society.”

The trend, he said, can across all programmes.

Technology graduates look at this as an opportunity to develop innovative solutions to address social issues. Business and finance graduates work towards enhancing community involvement among those who were previously left out of mainstream economic activity, he said.

“It is exciting and gratifying to see students from all backgrounds working together to address problems from all over the world. Being in an integrated, international campus creates strong global networks,” he said.

Universiti Malaya (UM) deputy chancellor and academic and international Prof Dr Kamali Gazali said students are increasingly interested in working with non-governmental organisations and policy reform organisations. Millennials, she said, tend to gravitate towards jobs that impact society or certain segments of the community.

“Our students are concerned about social and cultural changes as a result of political and economic situations and issues on equality and inclusivity. They seem to be taking up jobs that can effect change.”

This, she said, could be the result of the varsity’s curriculum which emphasises community engagement and volunteerism.

“In the current curriculum review, that’s the case; we introduced the Student Voluntary Environment (SIE) programme which will facilitate a holistic worldview among our students beyond their own majors.”

SIE courses are categorised into four clusters: thinking matters; emotional, physical and spiritual intelligence; technology/artificial intelligence and data analytics; and global issues and community sustainability. Among the job considerations of this new breed of talents, said Shamsuddin, is their perceived fit with the organisation.

“Much of a job applicant’s initial attraction to an organisation is based on the company’s image. Companies with a reputation for being more responsible are more attractive to jobseekers who want to contribute to a better world.”

Another pull factor may be the social role that the job affords them, for example, allowing them to help their local communities.

“An attractive salary is important, but it is not the only factor that job seekers look for.”

“Organisations with good standing on social responsibility and environmental sustainability are increasingly being considered as these factors can motivate and give employees a sense of pride,” said Shamsuddin.

Yusopan Suketawong Sinna (YSS) former chairman Datuk Zainuddin Ali said the new Cambridge International survey (see graphics) reflects today’s workforce.

“YSS was set up by the Government to promote volunteerism among students. We remind our youths not to romanticise the hard work that goes into addressing global issues but all our volunteer leaders are passionate and have participated in movements that make a difference.”

Business administration and resource management graduate Idrisie Batrisyia Riza Adam joined YSS as a management trainee. The 23-year-old wants to build student capacity through volunteerism, which led her to YSS. CAREER/TRUST HELP director Eric Bryan Amaladas said these days, employers and employees are on the same page when it comes to social responsibility and environmental sustainability.

“We see more fresh graduates aspire to contribute to society through the careers they pick.”

“The trend is more evident in the urban areas. Those in the rural areas tend to be more concerned about whether they can make a good living.”

He, however, said it did not mean everyone was rushing out to join Green Peace. The little things, like whether their prospective employer adopts socially responsible initiatives at the work place, are among the factors younger today take into consideration when looking for a job.

Bebyane Benin, 34, a clinical dietician in Tawau, Sabah. Currently pursuing a Master’s in Community Nutrition, she is specialising in food insecurity among communities in rural Malaysia.

“My boarding school friends are children of farmers and rubber tappers so they only got proper nutrition at the hotel.

“When I was volunteering at an orphanage, I realised that the majority of the children there weren’t orphans.

“Parents who couldn’t afford to support all their children, sent some of them to orphanages for a better life and an education.

“Both these experiences gave me an insight into the struggles faced by the poor.”

She hopes to make a career from helping these communities.

Youths today are more aware and sensitive to environmental, climate and global issues, according to the UCSI Group Corporate Affairs.

UCSI University, it said, facilitates and helps students develop their passion through its sustainable development goals.

“Our programme modules are constantly revised so that our graduates are able to frame ideas to solve global challenges across sectors,” the Group said.

Mechanical engineering student Sah Soon Yew, 21, wants to work on innovations that can improve safety, reliability and functionality in the automotive industry.

“I want to make better quality and cheaper products that are accessible to everyone,” he said.

Liew Seow Peng, 22, who’s studying actuarial science and finance, wants to use his knowledge to serve the underprivileged.

“My internship exposed me to an urban poor financial inclusion and credit access project. I want to make things better.”