

SPM indisputably an essential qualification

► Unwise for students to skip exam to work, as certificate widely recognised as prerequisite for employment: Experts

KUALA LUMPUR: The issue of SPM candidates forgoing an exam deemed crucial for their career path has been a growing concern over the past few years.

Education Director-General Azman Adnan said recently out of 383,685 candidates who registered for SPM in 2023, 10,160 did not sit for the exam.

According to media reports, 14,858 (3.8%) of the 388,832 candidates who registered for at least six subjects in 2022 did not turn up for the exam.

In 2021, 10,681 (2.7%) of the 392,837 registered candidates

skipped the exam.

Experts have emphasised the importance of SPM, saying it is the basic qualification required not only for higher education but also skills-based training programmes.

The certificate also guarantees youths a career path that is not only stable but also sustainable in the long term.

Universiti Putra Malaysia deputy vice-chancellor (Academic and International) Dr Ismi Arif Ismail said among the reasons for candidates to skip the SPM exam could be economic pressure and a lack of interest in continuing their

studies, Bernama reported.

"They perceive the exam as unimportant, while earning a living or providing additional income for their family is prioritised to meet their current needs.

"The desire to own gadgets, socialise with friends and spend time with family are also reasons they see SPM as unnecessary," said Ismi Arif, who was also the main consultant involved in the formulation of the Malaysian Youth Policy 2015-2035.

He said access to online business opportunities and participation in the gig economy as e-hailing drivers and delivery riders have succeeded in capturing the interest of school leavers, who want to earn an income. They are particularly attracted to the flexible working hours of gig economy jobs.

However, Ismi Arif said there have been cases of school leavers

sitting for SPM later when they realise its importance after venturing into jobs that require SPM qualification or its equivalent.

"Some of them sit for the SPM later to achieve greater stability in their careers," he added.

Universiti Malaya (UM) Department of Educational Foundations and Humanities lecturer Dr Abd Razak Zakaria criticised the attitude of students who "count their chickens before they hatch", saying they choose to forgo the SPM exam thinking they can succeed without the certificate.

Abd Razak, who is also UM Centre for Family Research and Development chairman, agreed some students can go on to become successful in life without an SPM certificate but pointed out the qualification is a prerequisite for pursuing higher studies and the basic requirement for employment.

"Success is possible even without an SPM certificate but they will still lag behind in knowledge and understanding. To succeed in life, one must have knowledge first."

Referring to a recent World Bank report, Abd Razak said Malaysian students spend an average of 12.5 years in school but learn the equivalent of only 8.9 years.

"If they don't sit for the SPM, it means that despite their years of schooling, they have nothing to show they have received formal education."

Abd Razak said students should consider education as something crucial and pursue it at least up to the SPM level, adding that after that, they are free to choose whether to continue their studies.

He said preventive measures must be taken to help parents, schools and the Education Ministry in addressing "what may seem like a minor crisis initially but can have significant repercussions in future".

"Schools must identify these students early so that they can be provided with education suited to their abilities.

"Parents must be told to be more aware of what kind of talents their children possess so that they can be guided towards channels that suit their capabilities," he said.



Abd Razak said while some individuals may succeed at getting a job even without an SPM certificate, they would still lag behind in knowledge and understanding. – SUNPIC