

'Focus on vocational training'

KEEPING UP: Produce talent to cater to global trends, says UPM vice-chancellor

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THERE are high hopes that the soon-to-be launched Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025 will ensure no one is left behind in the rapidly evolving job market.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Fauzi Ramlan said for Malaysia and its higher education system to be competitive and relevant, the main thrust of the blueprint should be on technical vocational education and training (TVET).

"We must produce the talent to cater to global trends, while making sure no one is left behind.

"The focus should be on creating skilled workers instead of channelling graduates into a saturated service industry," he told the *New Sunday Times* yesterday.

He said in industrial nations, such as Germany, TVET-trained graduates comprised the majority of the workforce.

"And they are highly valued skilled workers. No average graduate can get a job in Mercedes Benz or the likes there."

Universiti Utara Malaysia Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Mohamed Mustafa Ishak meanwhile highlighted the need for public universities to have more freedom in academic matters and their direction.

"We are fighting a losing battle in talent retention.

"The salaries of academics are too low," he said, adding that their salaries should be different from the public service scale.

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu student Elmira Ghazali, 21, hoped that the blueprint would provide a clearer picture of the government's plans and career options for students.

"There are public universities offering

courses such as marine science, and it would be helpful to know what the career prospects for such courses are.

"The belief is that one can only become a researcher if one takes up such a course," she said.

Jessica Kaur, 33, hoped that the blueprint would address the issue of mature students, who were left behind because of results and poverty.

"My brother, who is in his 30s, is studying part-time for his degree.

"He also studied part-time for his certificate and diploma courses since completing Form 5.

"There are no public universities that offer flexible degree courses. Studying privately costs a lot of money and takes longer.

"Public universities impose a lot of conditions on mature students, such as repeating Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) if it was done more than two years ago.

"I find this time consuming because if they are applying for a degree in English, isn't taking the Malaysia University English Test and the SPM English examination enough to go by?"



Professor Datuk Dr Mohamed Mustafa Ishak says Malaysia is fighting a losing battle in retaining talent