

## FUTURE EMPLOYMENT

# Vital for workers to develop high-order thinking, digital skills

**THE** Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0) is changing everything. With the merging of disruptive technologies, including robotics, artificial intelligence, genetics, nanotechnology, and 3D printing, the rapid change that IR4.0 brings is reshaping every industry.

Its rise also impacts the education sector's role in preparing students for the future of learning and work. There will be more changes in the future due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the school delivery system.

According to the 2019 Malaysian Economic Survey, the contribution of quality labour to the country's economic growth remains lower than the Organisation for Economic Coopera-

tion and Development's average.

Malaysia is facing labour market imbalances, with many low-, medium- and high-skilled occupations experiencing labour shortages.

Disruptive technologies have influenced the demand for digital and high-order thinking (HOT) skills in many occupations, with some skills are low and others more in demand. Besides, the Covid-19 crisis has exposed us to the inadequacies and inequities in our education services.

Students had to adjust to new school norms, wearing face masks with limited social interactions and practising physical distancing.

Many schools have made adjustments, reinvented students' learning

environment from the conventional teaching method to online teaching, but these new norms will pose assessment hurdles. Assessments in classrooms or exam rooms are no longer possible for students whenever there is a risk of Covid-19 infection.

Should online exams be conducted as an alternative? Are teachers ready to support students' digital learning and integrate online HOT skills teaching methods during and after the pandemic?

Students from affluent backgrounds can continue to learn during the pandemic as their parents can provide them Internet access and computers for online education. But what about those from disadvantaged backgrounds? The rising cost of living

has become a burden to students from low-income families.

While government initiatives like direct cash transfers and price controls ease their parents' financial burdens, yet, these Bottom 40 families cannot afford to subscribe to an Internet plan. This issue means that their children are left behind.

Education is a way for this group to escape poverty. The country's experiences of the emergence of IR4.0 and the pandemic have sped up the education sector to adopt information and communications technology (ICT) transformation.

The challenges to online teaching are the lack of digital competency to deploy online teaching deliveries on some part of teachers and the absence

of digital technologies that will make students' online learning possible. The future of jobs highlights the necessity of workers to acquire high-level HOT and digital skills.

There is a high chance that a significant percentage of students may remain behind at a time when these skills are becoming fundamental to future employment.

More explicit teaching of digital and HOT skills through professional development for teachers is crucial to ensure efficient education services offered by the school delivery system to transmit educational content for economic and social development.

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