

Strengthening collaboration between private sector and technical and vocational education and training in Malaysia



Background

Over the last ten years the world of work has changed dramatically. Digital transformation has accelerated, and consequently new job roles have been introduced that didn't exist a decade ago. As a result, the skill needs for employers have evolved.

The analysis of progress towards Malaysia's vision of increasing the percentage of skilled workers in the labour force and addressing digital skills adoption in low-skilled, low-income occupations has revealed challenges related to employer engagement. Employers did not acknowledge the necessity of existing skills training programs and expressed a lack of involvement in the development and implementation process for Vocational Education and Training (VET).

To respond to this challenge, the British Council worked with People 1st International through the EU-funded VET Toolbox project, to support the Manpower Department at the Ministry of Human Resources to benchmark the effectiveness of the Malaysian VET sector's engagement with the private sector, focusing on training for low-paid jobs and utilisation of digital technology.

Our solutions

Our research, consultation and analysis demonstrated the challenges and the opportunities in establishing a stronger process of engagement between the private sector and TVET. The feedback from participants demonstrated that raising awareness of employers in the benefits of training their workforce was critical if a demand-led system was to work. Key challenges and recommendations included:

- Engagement between the private sector and the VET sector was fragmented: Collaborative partnerships and engagement processes needed to be built to deliver demand-led solutions such as real work experience and CPD for trainers.
- Provision of technical skills development to re-skill/upskill the existing workers was limited and did not encourage ongoing learning. Awareness of a modular process and regulatory, recognised prior learning should be tied in as well as future skills for progression pathways.
- Utilisation of digital technologies was not reflected in 'standards': Development of an accessible, relevant, flexible and inclusive framework based on national occupational standards.
- Awareness and engagement of industry implementation models and resources for a skills development ecosystem was low. A positive skills development environment was created through collaboration of employers, TVET providers, trade unions and other stakeholders, using models such as skills academies.

To begin the journey of making the TVET system demand-driven, practical guidance and support for employers was critical to create skills analysis and training needs plans specific to their business growth. To support this, a series of capacity building workshops were developed and delivered to enhance the knowledge and competencies of skills advisors within the Manpower Department at the Ministry of Human Resources so they could support employers to:

- Identify skills gaps
- Develop training plans
- Find suitable training providers
- Access funding
- Monitor progress and record achievements

To promote understanding among employers regarding the advantages and factors to consider when partnering with a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) provider, we created an employer's guide and a roadmap. The guide includes case studies from employers, highlighting the essential procedures and tools they utilised for recruiting and training. Furthermore, it offers valuable insights on managing different stages to ensure delivery of successful training programmes.

Outcomes and impact:

Fully armed with new skills and approaches, the expert skills advisors now play a central role in helping to transform the engagement with the private sector. Forming part of a new Employer Skills Guidance Service, skills advisors help employers to identify and implement skills development training. 14 qualified skills advisors now work across sites within the two businesses as part of a pilot which will be rolled out more widely.

The impacts from the project are four-fold:

- **Beneficiary level:**
Low paid/low skilled workers will benefit from a more targeted and coordinated approach to lifelong learning. The collaboration between private and public stakeholders will deliver more short programmes that are accessible, flexible and relevant such as basic digital skills or support with core skills. This will enable professional pathways to be better understood and personal skills gaps and training needs analysis to be conducted.
- **Organisational level:**
Businesses are able to access support with skills development and with demonstrating return on investment and productivity growth.
- **VET system level:**
The improved engagement between VET providers and employers will enable both vocational education content and delivery to meet skills needs. The project trained a team of skills advisers who can take forward the engagement with business and ensure that they receive the right training for specific skills needs.
- **VET policy:**
The recommendations from this project will impact on VET policy particularly around the development and design of shorter training modules and the emphasis on digital and core skills.

About People 1st International

People 1st International partners with industry, development banks, government agencies, NGOs and education providers to create sustainable approaches to workforce development. Providing consultancy, research and training solutions globally, we develop skilled, productive and inclusive workforces that help drive social and economic growth.

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