

ADDRESSING THE TALENT GAP IN MALAYSIA'S FAST-GROWING GBS SECTOR

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Photo - (Seated Left to right) Nik Izudin Nik Mohd Yusof -Head of Strategy & Planning GBS Division MDEC; Chin Chee Seong-PIKOM Chairman; Cheah Kok Hoong-Outsourcing Malaysia Chairman; M. Pattabhiraman-OM Talent Council Chair; Professor Madya Dr Aini Binti Aman of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia; and Justin J Anthony, Outsourcing Malaysia Director together with some of the GEMS-SSO graduates.

A joint initiative by Malaysian government agencies MDEC and TalentCorp, in partnership with national IT industry association PIKOM's Outsourcing Malaysia (OM), is continuing to address the talent gap in the country's rapidly growing GBS (global business services) sector.

Representatives from OM, [Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation \(MDEC\)](#) and [Talent Corporation Malaysia \(TalentCorp\)](#) said the latest batch of GEMS-SSO graduates brings the total number to 250 of final year students trained and absorbed into the GBS (formerly known as the outsourcing services) industry since 2014.

The Graduate Employability Management Scheme (GEMS-SSO) is the GBS-focused track under TalentCorp's GEMS programme, which is aimed at providing industry exposure to final year university students prior to graduation. The programme is co-funded by TalentCorp together with industry partners from the GBS sector.

"The GEMS-SSO programme was conceived when in 2014, the OM Talent Council teamed up with Talent Corp and MDEC to train undergraduates while still in university. It is a win-win solution for all," said [OM chairman, Cheah Kok Hoong, speaking during the recent graduation ceremony](#), which saw students from five local universities - University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Multimedia University Malaysia (MMU) and Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM).

"The universities can offer value added industry relevant knowledge while students are able to enhance their skillset and increase their employability rate. At the same time, the GBS industry has a solution to bridge existing talent gaps," said Cheah.

Emphasis on two skill sets

He said that validated by industry, and delivered by academia and supported by the government, the programme has received "tremendous support from local universities who offer the 10-12 days training programme to their final year students."

In addition to the five academic institutions mentioned by Cheah, University Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) is also involved with the initiative.

Under the GEMS-SSO programme, undergraduates undergo 10-12 days of intensive training with specialisation in HR or Finance. This training is internationally certified and delivered by IAOP qualified trainers.

"The biggest segment of demand for GBS is in the area of HR and Finance, hence the emphasis on these two skillsets. The onus now is to bring the GEMS-SSO programme to more Malaysian undergraduates nationwide," said Cheah.

In addition, students are required to sit for the globally recognised Certified Outsourcing Specialist (COS) IAOP (Industry Association of Outsourcing Professionals) certification examination as well as undergo a minimum of ten-weeks to six-months of internship with a GBS company.

Unemployed graduates

Academic representatives from MMU, UKM and UNIMAS welcomed such initiatives to build local talent attuned to meet the needs of growing industry sectors.

One of cited research studies was The World Bank's Malaysia Economic Monitor (published in December 2013), which noted that one in five degree holders in Malaysia under the age of 25 were unemployed.

In addition, the 2014 Labour Force Survey report by the Department of Statistics released in June 2014 revealed that one third (31 percent) of those unemployed in Malaysia had a tertiary education, which translated to about 130,000 persons. This was confirmed by Ministry of Education statistics that show close to 25 percent of local graduates were unemployed (51,835 out of 202,328 graduates).

Dr. Mariati binti Norhashim, Faculty of Management, MMU, welcomed the government-industry-academia collaboration. "[Industry input is always crucial and the GEMS-SSO initiative is truly designed to deliver the best possible](#) talents for the industry,"

"New Finance and Accounting (F & A) shared service employment opportunities fail to attract young graduates mainly due to lack of awareness and mismatched skills. So, in addition to creating awareness to the GBS industry, this programme also enhances our graduates' technical and soft skills for better internship placement and employment in the Industry," added Dr. Aini Aman associate professor, UKM.

Dr. Rizal Abu Bakar, deputy dean, Career Affairs and Alumni, UNIMAS, said, "Transforming students in a subtle yet meaningful way, is one of the key attributes of the GEMS-SSO programme among the many other benefits it brings for a mutually beneficial collaboration."