Creating work-ready students

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VOCATIONAL colleges have become increasingly popular, with high numbers of applications for every intake.

The four-year programme offered by vocational colleges consists of a two-year pre-diploma course, followed by a two-year diploma course.

"It is a fast-track programme for students after their Penilaian Menengah Rendah, where they will obtain their Malaysian Vocational Diploma (DVM)," said Klang Vocational College director, Fuzyah Abdullah.

The Klang Vocational College, previously known as Sekolah Menengah Vokasional Klang, the first vocational school in Selangor, has 770 students with a teaching staff of 120.

Under the Education Ministry’s vocational education transformation programme, 78 schools were upgraded to college status, enabling its students to obtain a diploma at the age of 20.

"With the transformation, we aim to change the perception of parents and students towards vocational education, and to elevate it to a higher platform.

"Vocational education produces marketable students who have the hands-on skills to enter the workforce, or even start their own business," she added.

Fuzyah shared that the college is now in its planning stages to collaborate with The Welding Institute South East Asia to make Klang Vocational College a centre of excellence for welding.

The initiative by the Education Ministry was to create a bond between the colleges and the industry, where skilled students are needed in the workforce.

"We aim to have 70 per cent of our students entering the workforce as skilled workers, with 10 per cent venturing into their own business, and 20 per cent furthering their studies to a higher level," added Fuzyah.

Under the Malaysian Technical University Network (MTUN), the college is also linked to five universities - Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM), Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP), Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP), Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM), and Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UnIKL).

With the mission of making vocational education the first choice, the Klang Vocational College offers eight courses which are Welding, Industrial Machining Technology, Air Conditioning, Electronics Technology, Electrical Technology, Automotive Technology, Building Construction Technology, and Business Management.

"We prepare the students with strong practical background and include some entrepreneurial skills, to ensure they have a holistic knowledge of the real world.

"In vocational colleges, we emphasise hands-on education, focusing on the creative, innovative and technical aspects, not just theoretical knowledge," she added.

Recently, the college was also the host for the national level 1Malaysia Vocational College Carnival, where they saw many students and their families who showed an interest in enrolling into a vocational college.

During the carnival, a student of the college was adjudged the national level winner in the skills competition for his freezing and air conditioning refrigerant project. The carnival was held with the support from the Sekolah Menengah Teknik Klang Selangor Alumni Association.

The alumni’s president, Maznan Mustapa said the association provides a support system to the college, by helping and advocating the programmes in the college.

"The transition from a school to a college increases the interest of students enrolling, by creating a positive change from a normal schooling environment to a higher institution environment.

Maznan added that the production-based education in vocational colleges would mould students to be capable and competent people in the workforce.

"Many of the alumni become successful entrepreneurs, and this goes to show that vocational education has its value and has its worth in the market," he said.

The vocational education transformation programme is part of the National Education Blueprint 2012 and the 10th Malaysia Plan, which emphasised increasing the number of proficient human resources.

The ministry’s technical and vocational education division director, Ahmad Tajudin Jab was reported as saying that the National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs) will result in nearly one million jobs requiring vocational certificates or diplomas over the next ten years, creating a huge market for students who choose to study in the vocational colleges.
Students working on their projects in the freezing and air conditioning refrigerant workshop at Klang Vocational College.

Students at Klang Vocational College in their welding class.
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Students at the Klang Vocational College in their welding class. Pix by Syarafiq Abd Samad

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