

Supporting Students' Transition from Classroom to Career

In collaboration with



62 participants from

37 NGO, Corporates, practitioners and students

Summary of Roundtable Discussion

TOPIC 1

Reflecting on Students' Pathways and Challenges

Participants were asked to discuss common challenges young people face in navigating their post-SPM pathways.

1. Decision Making Pressure and Lack of Information and Support:

- Students are compelled to make significant life decisions at a young age without sufficient guidance. They lack support in terms of information, knowledge, skills, and resources to make informed decisions.
- Students have limited access to information due to poor internet connectivity in certain parts of the country and they lack the ability to sift through to locate information most relevant to them.

2. Misconceptions and Mindset Barriers amongst Students:

- Some students and the people around them have fixed mindsets about the post-SPM options available to them, often based on inaccurate information.
- Students have difficulty bridging the gap between their current status and future goals. They also lack understanding of the long-term implications of choices they make in school, such as choosing their subject stream when they enter Form 4.
- Many students, parents and teachers still perceive TVET or other skill-based qualifications negatively.

3. Systemic Issues In the School Setting:

- Students lack autonomy and freedom of choice under the current education system to select academic streams and courses which fit their interests. Some schools tend to focus narrowly on good grades and university, neglecting the students' diverse needs, interests, and options.
- Some teachers still have inaccurate perceptions about academic streams and career choices, such as only less-smart students choose the Accounting stream in Form 4 and high academic intelligence is necessary for certain courses.

- The system where schools have insufficient counsellors guiding thousands of students and managing other projects, overstretch the counsellors, so information shared with school counsellors does not effectively reach the students. School counsellors also lack up-to-date information, particularly in areas related to emerging career pathways and industry needs.
- School subjects are theoretical; education on potential pathways and life skills should be incorporated into the curriculum.

4. Parental Influence:

- Parents play a significant role in shaping students' education and career decisions but are often not involved in conversations about pathways after SPM.
- Parents can feel out of their depth, especially if they didn't excel in their own education or careers.

5. Financial Priorities and Accessibility:

- Financial constraints for low-income families influences decision making and can lead students to opt to join the family business over further education.
- Post-pandemic, students focus more on practical and accessible learning options.

Additionally, despite the fact that unconventional career paths like skills-based certifications or direct employment may be viable options, some participants discussed why they are not well-received.

6. Unprepared and Uninformed Employers:

- Employers lack awareness of unconventional education pathways and their students' talent, resulting in a lack of relevant support and job opportunities for these graduates.

7. Gig-economy:

- Students are more interested in becoming influencers and entering the gig economy.
- There is a low motivation to join conventional job markets due to perceived low levels of job satisfaction and salary.
- Immediate returns from gig work overshadows long-term education investment.

8. Language Proficiency:

- Opportunities are hindered by language barriers, especially low proficiency in English, which might affect their ability to secure decent job opportunities in the private sector.

9. Institutional Challenges:

- Some education institutions do not prepare graduates to meet industry skills demands.
- Graduates lack practical application skills when they join the workforce resulting in the need for further training investment.



We then invited participants to describe the specific forms of support currently available to students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds. The participants highlighted some of their own successful initiatives or enablers (students).

1. Peer Support Mechanism:

- School seniors (alumni) sometimes assist younger students with university and scholarship applications which works very effectively.

2. Community Engagement:

- Interaction with beneficiaries, particularly direct engagement with rural communities, is essential to fostering trust.

3. Innovative Models:

- Some education institutions' models, such as 42 Malaysia, bridge the gap between traditional university learning and on-the-job requirements.
- Some NGOs and practitioners have started working on customising more practical and relevant support for students, such as offering scholarships for SPM graduates and financial aid to study short courses.

4. Financial Support Initiatives:

- Financial assistance to help cover students' rent and food, as well as providing stipends during their studies, ensures deserving students can study without distractions.

5. Counsellor Empowerment:

- Counsellors are being provided with resources and support to foster a culture where students feel comfortable and confident that they are receiving relevant and personalised guidance.

However, the participants are aware that there are still some gaps to be filled and were asked to identify areas for improvement.

6. Narrow Financial Support Mechanisms:

- There is limited financial support for SPM graduates, especially those exploring unconventional pathways. Most scholarships and bursaries are offered to academically excellent Pre-U students.
- Despite the availability of scholarships or other financial aid, there are still scholars dropping out due to the need to work or take care of parents, with some struggling to maintain academic performance with family obligations.

7. Organisational ROI Concerns:

- Working level staff from some corporates are keen to explore offering financial aid to SPM graduates, and support students with an interest in pursuing unconventional education pathways. However, they are sometimes faced with challenges from management who may need to focus on safer Return-on-Investments (ROI). Students graduating with skills-based qualifications can be seen to offer a lower ROI than degree holders.

8. Inaccurate Perceptions of Young Graduates:

- Younger graduates are perceived negatively compared to degree holders, impacting hiring confidence among corporates. Despite being quality graduates, the negative perceptions affect their initial career opportunities.

9. One-off Programmes:

- Many organisations face challenges as their efforts in schools are often surface-level due to limited touchpoints. This causes a lack of tangible or significant outcomes from the programmes.

10. Limited Resources and Support for Counsellors:

- There appears to be limited resources and insufficient support from some District Education Offices (PPD) for their counsellors.
- There is a need to reduce the barriers with some District Education Offices (PPD) and State Education Offices (JPN) to enable more public-private collaboration.

11. Lack of Focus on Extracurricular Activities and Early Advocacy:

- Prior to considering university, students need to identify their interests, strengths, and passion before they even enter Form 4 and 5.
- Participants identified a need for a better focus on extracurricular activities beyond sports to ensure students are equipped with soft skills.

TOPIC 3

Envisioning Future Collaborations

The participants ended the roundtable discussion session by proposing topics which they think are worth exploring further, which were put to a vote.

Ranking	Topic proposed
#1	Raise awareness and encourage students to consider diverse pathways into careers
#2	Soft skills development to prepare young people for any pathways
#3	Enriching and supporting the roles of school counsellors
#4	More support for lower M40 student group
#5	Improving financial literacy



42 Malaysia will host the next roundtable discussion!

Stay tuned for more event information from 42 Malaysia.

This discussion summary and photos taken during the event are available here:

www.finco.my/classroom2career

