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**T**HE fourth industrial revolution has disrupted the world of work. The World Economic Forum's 2016 *Future of Jobs* report says that "35% of core skills will change between 2015 and 2020".

The consequence of this can already be felt in the Malaysian corporate landscape today.

According to Hays recruiting experts, 69% of Malaysian employers are "concerned they don't have the right talent to achieve current business objectives".

This is why it is imperative to upskill, reskill or even multi-skill yourself, in order to remain employable and relevant.

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Government bodies and private companies are already taking the above steps to enhance the skills of their employees through training programmes, short-term courses like executive education, and online courses.

HELP University's ELM Graduate School dean Datin Dr Wendy Liow says: "The executive education and professional development courses for instance, help to fill up skills gaps brought about by changes and advancement in technology as well as the challenges of working in a globalised and uber-connected world."

Such short-term programmes are beneficial in providing up-to-date knowledge and access to new insights and frameworks in order to boost one's capability at work, especially in an age where data analytics is the new currency.

*But are these sufficient to equip everyone from different professions and industries with professional growth?*

## MORE THAN SELF-LEARNING

According to a poll conducted by Hays earlier this year, "69% of Malaysian respondents take responsibility for developing their skills using a combination of self-learning and leveraging on-the-job experience."

This is commendable as it shows that a lot of our working professionals are already aware of the need to upskill and stay updated. This also means that they are, in fact, taking control of their personal and professional development, rather than relying purely on learning and development opportunities provided by their employers.

However, certain industries and lines of work require more than just self-learning and training programmes if you intend to thrive in your career and climb the corporate ladder.

Hays Malaysia regional director Tom Osborne says: "My one note of warning about relying on informal learning would be for career-minded candidates to keep up with the formal qualifications trending in their sector. For some job roles, employers require specific tertiary qualifications and even postgraduate qualifications, so they won't accept anything less."

Yes, it does require more investment in terms of your time and money. But what if it is a requirement for the position or profession you are aiming for?

A degree serves as an entry ticket to becoming an accountant, for instance, but if you are eyeing a more senior role, a masters would be recommended. According to Dr Liow, "a master's degree is the new bachelor's" and having a master's degree is important as it provides more specialisation to meet the growing demands for new skills.

Here's another example. Guidance counsellor Emma R. Wilson who pursued her Masters in Education at the University of New Hampshire says: "I

# IS TRAINING SUFFICIENT FOR GROWTH?

## IS GRADUATE EDUCATION THE WAY TO GO?



think, especially if you're a psychology major undergrad, you can't really do anything without a master's degree.

"The number of people we see who go on to get [entry-level jobs without a master's degree] in psychology is startlingly low."

## INVESTING IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

Graduate education is expected to grow much faster than any other education level.

HELP University's ELM Graduate School (ELM stands for Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Management) is an example. They understood this trend and took the position that post-grad education will be a pivotal force in the growth of universities.

Thus, HELP University has evolved its graduate school to focus on the entrepreneurial, leadership and management curricula to encourage an interdisciplinary interest among its students and allow them to stand out in any industry.

Dr Liow shares that "it is important for a graduate school like ours to illuminate the potential benefits associated with the training and development of business leaders who understand the interdependencies of various disciplines."

"The ELM framework guides our syllabi and delivery to impart entrepreneurial foresight and resourcefulness, and the leadership and management capabilities, to actualise and create value, opportunities and growth for the individuals and the organisations in which they work."

## THE ROLE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

*Is it to train students for career development only?*

"My first response is simply to say "YES". Unfortunately, the answer is often much more complex. I think that graduate education has a much bigger role," Dr Liow adds.

"In HELP, we believe that our role goes beyond providing them the skills to be more employable; we also cultivate a growth mindset in our students to drive change and create value in their organisations."

"Some regard a graduate education programme as a commodity. Unlike cars or houses, the return of investment on education depends on how much effort the student puts into the programme, and not the programme per se."

She says: "In a sense, I feel strongly that students will get better returns if they regard education as an investment for the future, a way to help them to weather recessionary pressure."

"Over the years, I have seen average students do exceedingly well in their lives because they regard education as a transformative opportunity for growth and not just to get a better job," she says. As the dean of the school, she says she often questions and challenges herself on "What is it that the ELM Graduate School can offer or do better than all the other colleges out there."

"For one, ELM Graduate School offers a very wide range of industry-oriented and specialised master's degrees in fields such as Economic Crime, the first and only one in Asia; Project Management, the first and only one in Southeast Asia to be accredited by the Global Accreditation Centre for Project Management education Program in the US; Accounting and Finance, with important exemptions from CPA professional exams; Managerial Psychology, Entrepreneurship and many more on top of its popular MBA and DBA programmes."

"It also offers two research-based degrees (MPhil/PhD) to students who are looking to develop their skills in independent research, critical thinking and problem solving for specific business-related topics."

Professor Geoffrey Williams, the MPhil/PhD Programme Director says the approach towards research degrees at ELM has been transformed to

create what they call, "industry-ready researchers".

"I am working with a fantastic research-oriented team as well as local and international research partners to equip more research students for the world of active, industry-focused work."

"We particularly like to support people who want to conduct their research degrees while they work and we help them to use their research in their careers as they are studying. This ensures that our research projects are topical, relevant and have real impact," he says.

The introduction of the new Master of HR Development at ELM, says Dr Liow, focuses on helping managers to go beyond their functional core expertise and become strategic business partners.

"We see a need to equip practitioners to build strategic leadership capabilities to meet the changing demands of their industry and companies," says Liow, who spent more than a decade in senior HR leadership positions in various Fortune 500 companies.

She adds: "Beyond knowledge and skills, perspectives are important. The ability to learn and grow from mistakes, the humility of having the sense of being a player in a bigger fabric of life, and learning to ask why – all these are values we want our students to experience to enable them to contemplate, analyse, adapt, actualise and be business leaders of consequence."

## IN SUMMARY

Everyone has a different way of learning in order to grow themselves.

While online learning, training programmes and certification courses do provide you with new, up-to-date knowledge and upskilling/reskilling/multi-skilling opportunities, you must carefully study the field or industry you are in and know the requirements needed to progress to a particular role.

In order to stand out from the rest of your peers, investing in graduate education could be an option for you to consider.

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For further information on the HELP University ELM Graduate School, visit [elm.help.edu.my](http://elm.help.edu.my)