

A world of change in education: UMS don

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KOTA KINABALU: The post Covid-19 era will have far-reaching implications for thousands of courses which provide skills to youth in the area of tourism and hospitality, according to academician, Associate Prof Dr Kenneth F Rodrigues.

In a statement, the Deputy Director of the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Centre for E-Learning said the workforce would have to be retrained and re-purposed for productive employment.

"The tourism and travel industry which employs millions of workers globally and the loss of employment in this vital sector will have far reaching implications for thousands of courses which provide skills to youth in the area of tourism and hospitality," he said.

"Business Enterprises and industry will face an increasing need to transition to robotics and artificial intelligence in order to create a new workforce that is immune to disruptions by threats to public health.

"There will be an increasing demand for engineers in the area of artificial intelligence and robotics which will displace millions of low skilled workers who are currently employed on the assembly line," said Rodrigues, who is currently a member of the Covid-19 Screening Team at the UMS Biotechnology Research Institute.

He pointed out that farming systems will become increasingly automated as precision agriculture and robotics reduce dependency on the human workforce as is the trend in most industrialised societies.

"Educational institutions will have to address this need for agricultural Engineers with a specialisation in the area of precision agriculture," he said.

He said the public healthcare system is likely the face and increase for medical personnel with enhanced skills in the area of diagnostics and telemedicine.

He said the education industry has been increasingly adopting technology as it offers learners with a flexible learning environment.

"Real time teleconferencing which offers a real world classroom experience from the safety and convenience of one's apartment has replaced the niche market

of Ivy League colleges which offered twinning programmes," he said.

He said this system is not without its faults, as online assessments are subject to the honesty and integrity of the student.

One way in which this fault is being addressed is by conducting proctored examination at certified examination centres which ensure the veracity of the examination process.

He said redundancy of information is another major challenge to educational institutions.

"Traditionally, institutions such as Harvard, Caltech and Massachusetts Institute of Technology have served as the primary drivers of fundamental research, with the vast majority of global Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) following their trends in knowledge creation as is evident by the citations which their researches obtain," he said.

He said a higher educational institution will have to invest increasingly in fundamental research in order to remain relevant to the current global trends in research and innovation, given the obvious fact that fundamental research is both expensive and required highly focused researchers.

"The growing dominance of global educational providers who offer online courses such as Edx, Udemy and Coursera presents another challenge to global HEIs together with online broadcasting platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo," he said.

He said these online courses are taught by qualified experts in their respective domains of knowledge and the certificates are now being recognised by global employers such as Microsoft and Google.

He noted that nowadays, students prefer to combine a portfolio of online courses which are relevant to their employability rather than attend a three a four-year degree course which comes at the cost of a student loan and time.

"The reality is that employers today prefer a specific set of knowledge skills and attitudinal competencies as opposed to the earlier preference for a prestigious degree," he said.



Workforce would have to be retrained and re-purposed for productive employment.