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The Relationship between Employability Skill and Job Mismatch towards Graduates' Unemployment

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Abstract: Academic graduates are expected to contribute more significantly to industry and the national economy by bringing in skills, knowledge, innovation, and productivity. Their role is essential in driving industrial growth, sustainability, and overall development for economic growth. However, in Malaysia, the difficulty of finding employment for graduates has become a major problem, not only from the graduates' point of view but also from the employer. While the graduates are struggling to find job openings that match their skills, the employers at the other end find it difficult to locate people who are compatible with their businesses' vision. In Malaysia, several causes contributed to an increase in the unemployment rate for recent graduates including graduates' lack of employability skills and job mismatches. Quality such as communication, soft skills, problem-solving, and creative abilities, are shown to be weak in unemployed graduates. This research attempts to examine the relationship between employability skills and job mismatches towards the graduate's unemployment. A questionnaire has been developed to gather the data. Graduates of the Faculty of Business and Management (FBM), UiTM have been identified as the population. Descriptive and regression analyses were run using SPSS software. Findings suggested that both independent variables (employability skills and job mismatches) contributed significantly towards the graduate's unemployment. This study is significant as it highlights the need for graduates to improve necessary skills such as leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills (Briones, G. et al., 2021) needed within the industry to land a job.

Keywords: *Employability, Skills, Job Mismatch, Graduates, Unemployment.*

1. Introduction and Background

Most developing countries face the issue of unemployment which has significantly affected their ability to sustain their economies (Omar & Rajoo, 2016). Unemployment is typically understood when a person is unable to secure employment that will allow them to support themselves (Chen & Chan, 2019). Greater unemployment demonstrates that its human resources are not being used effectively. Every increment in the unemployment rate will negatively affect a country's GDP significantly. Due to these adverse effects, countries should manage unemployment in the labor market. In Malaysia, unemployment among graduates has been a hot issue for many years. Graduate unemployment is defined as unemployment among people with a qualified degree of academic (Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012). Many of them need to wait for a long time after graduation period to find a job. Usually, they need to wait for at least 6 months and more than that. According to a Malay Mail article, the number of unemployed graduates increased by 22.5% to 202,400 in persons in the year 2020 compared to 165,200 in 2019 (DOSM, 2021). Graduates Statistics 2020 reported an increment in the number of job losses and keeping rise in the country's amount of unemployment by 200,000 to 718,100 persons in 2020 (Mahidin, 2021).

Various factors lead to an increase in the unemployment rate for recent graduates in Malaysia, but the most common ones include graduates' lack of employability skills and job mismatches. Many employability skills, such as communication, soft skills, problem-solving abilities, and creative talents, are lacking in unemployed graduates (Omar & Rajoo, 2016). Thus, the mismatch occurred when there was a weak "match" between the organization's expectations of characteristics (skills required) and the graduates' expectations of characteristics (Velciu, 2017). Graduate qualities have been highlighted as a critical component in developing graduates' skills, and so educational level influences graduate unemployment. Graduates enter an organization with preconceived notions about what they can expect to receive from the firm that employs them, as well as what they believe they can contribute to the company (Nel et al., 2013). In any event, graduates anticipate the sector to provide a meaningful and demanding career, recognition, a promotion, aid from team management, and training to build soft skills (Smith & Krüger, 2005). Graduates should be able to enhance their abilities and skills in carrying out activities, assisting the company in accomplishing its goals and objectives, and maintaining a positive public image.

There are numerous reasons why graduates' unemployment remains high. One of the factors contributing to Malaysian graduates' unemployment has been recognized as graduate quality. Previous study has shown that Bangladeshi business graduates significantly lacked employability skills, including poor teamwork, poor communication and interpersonal skills, poor ability to learn and adapt to a new environment, poor negotiation skills, and poor organizing skills (Milon, M et al., 2021). Employers in the industry may give graduates negative feedback since they lack the requisite skills and talents for the position. Furthermore, graduates lack employability skills and perform poorly on work tasks (Mohd Abdul Kadir et al., 2020) Ismail & Wei Sieng, 2011). Graduates typically lack communication skills, are not fluent in the English language, lack technical knowledge and skills, and lack problem-solving abilities. According to Azman Seri Haron, president of the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF), in Malaysia World News (2019), 73.2% of respondents' organizations stated that most graduates lacked needed skills such as problem-solving and communication abilities. Many surveys have been conducted, and the results show that graduates need to enhance their English ability to communicate effectively, and Malaysian graduates are not job-ready (Britshi, 2019). It illustrates the low level of job readiness among Malaysian graduates as a problem that must be addressed and can be described as an example of supply failing to meet demand. In this case, graduates are applying for jobs without having taken the necessary steps to acquire the skills that employers require.

In line with previous research and empirical findings, there is a link between job mismatch, employability skills, graduate qualities, and educational level and workplace unemployment concerns (Hamid, 2014). However, graduate expectations and employer expectations may differ greatly. Employers will always be looking for someone who can fit into their organization and grow into a human asset, and this truth must be embraced. Most employers will be looking for job-specific talents, but they also expect graduates to have developed a few generic skills (Rehman, 2014). Throughout the hiring process, employers may seek both employability skills and job-specific abilities. Throughout this study, unemployment reasons are examined from the perspective of graduates. Even though various factors lead to an increase in the unemployment rate for recent graduates in Malaysia, the most common ones include graduates' lack of employability skills and job mismatches. To further comprehend this issue, aspects such as employability skills and job mismatches are investigated to further imply whether these factors could explain the graduate unemployment scenario in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

Graduate Unemployment: The factors that affect graduate unemployment have been studied by several studies formany years. Graduate unemployment is defined as unemployment among people with a qualified degree of academic (Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012). Many of them need to wait for a long time after graduation period to find a job. Usually, they need to wait for at least 6 months and more than that. With a more difficult economic climate, it appears likely that unemployment among graduates in Malaysia will continue to rise (Husin, 2021). As mentioned by (Singh & Singh, 2008), although there is a sufficient supply of graduates in Malaysia, there is still a low level of demand. Graduate unemployment occurs when the supply of graduates is high, but the demand from the labor market is low in a particular industry, resulting in fewer jobs available in the market or industry. Competition arose because of the large number of graduates from Malaysia's many universities. Graduates must compete for jobs that are appropriate for their educational background or competence. Most graduates have no prior work experience when they begin their careers. Most job advertisements state that businesses prefer candidates with prior work experience, making it more difficult for graduates to find jobs. Some graduates who are having difficulty finding work will simply take whatever positions are available or offered to them because it takes longer to be hired in the industry that matches their education. According to a prior study, recent graduates' lack of employability skills, low English proficiency, and being overly picky on the job while requesting a higher income are all key causes of graduate unemployment (Zahiid, 2015).

Employability Skills: SCANS (1991) defines employability skills as "transferable abilities that reflect the enabling knowledge, abilities, and attitudes required for success in the workplace in the twenty-first century." Graduates must have employability skills in the twenty-first century (Humburg, Velden & Verhagen, 2013). ICT skills, technical thinking and skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills, and a willingness to learn new things are all important. A set of critical skills that will be strengthened in terms of knowledge expansion,

level of competence, and work success capabilities. Employability skills are essential qualifications for many job tasks; thus, it may be critical for a person's employment to flourish at any professional level. Being unskilled in English is one of the key causes of the high unemployment rate among Malaysian local graduates (Zainuddin, 2019). Furthermore, (Lan, et al., 2011) revealed that graduates from public colleges face difficulty with job-related tasks at the workplace, such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading in English. Following that, Malaysia realized the crucial importance of English. Students entering this program are required to be well-prepared for future professional work. A command of the language is required to properly communicate and connect with others. Graduates who succeed in relevant talents, such as communication and interpersonal skills, have a better chance of getting hired and advancing faster to the international level, but it may be difficult to anticipate those requirements from graduates.

Three types of talents are needed for 21st-century employability and are generally applicable to most jobs. Interpersonal skills are the ability to communicate with others, including teamwork and leadership qualities, which can aid in the interaction of others, which is human capital. As a result, they can aid in improving workplace performance. Intrapersonal talents include motivation, willingness to learn and embrace new developments, decision-making abilities, and analytical thinking. These abilities are essential for graduates to be more creative and to improve their general knowledge in the workplace. ICT skills entail the application of technology in accordance with the graduates' abilities, as well as the operation of ICT software and tools. These competencies are critical for determining graduates' talents and their ability to use technology in their employment. As a result, most businesses prefer to hire graduates who already have competence in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), can operate in a group team, have good interpersonal skills, and are fluent in English (Singh & Singh, 2008). Furthermore, graduates have lower employability skills and lack the ability to perform well on the job (Hossain, 2018). A graduate's employability, which may be defined as a set of employment achievements in terms of abilities, knowledge, and personal attributes (Rehman, 2014), can demonstrate the ability to be employed and prosper in one's profession, which benefits both the business and the individual.
H1: There is a significant relationship between employability skills and graduates' unemployment.

Job Mismatch: Concern over the problem of job mismatch and its effects on graduate unemployment has risen in recent years. Job mismatch is another factor contributing to the graduate unemployment crisis (Mohd Abdul Kadir, 2020; Singh, 2022; Steed, 2018; Kakooza et al., 2019 and Pitan & Muller, 2023). Employment mismatches are a new, complicated, and dynamic notion that has an impact on the employment market and the whole economy (Velciu, 2017). The role that job mismatches play in increasing graduate unemployment rates has been noted in numerous researches (Kakooza et al., 2019). A work mismatch occurs when there is an imbalance between the jobs available and the job seekers. One of the main reasons for job mismatch is the excess of graduates in some industries, which results in a lack of suitable employment possibilities for individuals with specific qualifications. It might happen when a position is listed that demands specific qualities that candidates do not have. The original definition of the word "job mismatch" was a lack of a degree in the workplace, which was associated with unemployment. It could be seen as a mismatch between job supply and demand. This oversupply of graduates has been identified as one of the key reasons for the higher unemployment rates seen in recent years. Some competitions emerge to boost job productivity and better match personnel's abilities, capabilities, and expertise.

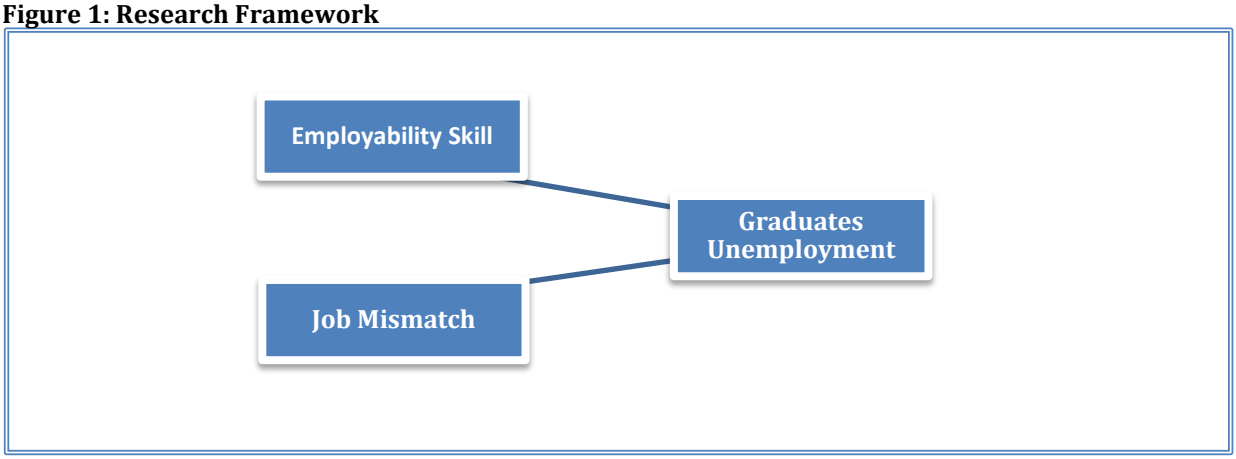
There is a significant mismatch between the workforce produced by universities and the demands of the industrial sector. The mismatch between university training and the skill sets needed by the labor market is a primary factor causing job mismatches in addition to the oversupply problem. It has been highlighted as the critical missing link in the field of education. The nation has focused a lot of attention on specialized education. According to Prof. Dr. Yeah Kim Leng of Sunway University, technical and vocational training must be provided to meet industry expectations, and the government intends to develop Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to meet industry-specific requirements (Singh, 2022). Higher education institutions must recognize the needs of the labor market and modify their courses accordingly to prevent skill mismatch which subsequently leads to graduate unemployment (Mohd Abdul Kadir, 2020). The emerging difficulty of job mismatch in the labor market is focusing on managers and human resources specialists at firms. Businesses prioritize hiring workers with job-relevant abilities when looking to cut costs and boost output. However, when graduates lack the skills needed for the open positions, there is a mismatch

between the firms' requirements and their qualifications. This matching process may take longer when there is a considerable talent mismatch, which exacerbates the problem of graduate unemployment. A dynamic labor market depends on the process of employers and graduates matching employment roles. The large quantity of talent mismatch that occurs, nevertheless, makes this matching process difficult (Chowdhury & Islam, 2021).

Finding the appropriate individuals for the right positions is becoming increasingly difficult. Qualifications and skill requirements are always evolving. Mismatching occurs when there is a lack of equilibrium between job seekers and workplaces but with a greater possibility of obtaining another job that meets the job requirements (Velciu, 2017). Education-job mismatch, qualification-job mismatch, and experience-job mismatch are the three categories of job mismatch (Mohd Abdul Kadir, 2020). Graduates who are overqualified or underqualified for the job are referred to as having a qualification-job mismatch. A mismatch between a degree earned and a job requirement is referred to as an education-job mismatch. There are worries that graduates are not adequately prepared before entering the workforce in terms of skills and knowledge. A study conducted in Nigeria found that among hired graduates in Nigeria, the skills mismatch was 60.6% with graduates' weaknesses coming from communication, information technology, decision-making, critical thinking, interpersonal relationships, entrepreneurial skills, and numeracy (Pitan & Muller, 2023). According to a study conducted by a UK university, the main issue with having a job mismatch is that the number of graduates confronted with abundance from similar courses will be limited to a few select graduates who are regarded as worthy of the position. The true problem is job mismatch, which occurs when many graduates graduate from the same course, causing companies to be more selective in hiring graduates who deserve the position (Steed, 2018). To address the issue of job-skills mismatch and reduce graduate unemployment, graduates must enhance their employability skills. By improving their skills in areas that are in high demand by employers, graduates can increase their opportunities to land a job successfully.
H2: There is a significant relationship between job mismatch and graduates' unemployment.

3. Research Methodology

Figure 1: Research Framework



As a quantitative research method, a descriptive study with a single cross-sectional design was proposed in this study. A single sample represents the respondents' target population. Information for the descriptive research on unemployment worries is acquired through questionnaire surveys. Graduates who received the survey via Google Form (GF) were asked to submit feedback on closed-ended questions. This study employs statistical methodology to analyze data, with the implementation of SPSS serving as a baseline for numerical values. The outcomes were measured using the Likert Scale and the Nominal Scale. The population consisted of graduate students from the Faculty of Business and Management (FBM) of the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Selangor, Puncak Alam campus. In this study, the whole population consists of 1686 graduates from various courses such as Insurance, Business Economics, Finance, and many more. A total of 310 people responded to the surveys. The sample size for this investigation was calculated using Krejcie and Morgan's Table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

To disseminate the questionnaires, the respondents were chosen using a random sample approach. The convenience sampling technique was used to select respondents from specific population groups. Convenience sampling was chosen since it just involves picking people who are accessible and freely available (Taherdoost, 2016). Convenience sampling is known as a fair method of gathering samples because, when done correctly, it helps to lessen the problem of biases when compared to other sampling methods. Because the researcher has their own targeted sample that is reachable, the convenience sampling method is applied. As a survey instrument, a questionnaire has been used. The SPSS software was used to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis was used to describe, analyze, examine, and determine the primary properties of the quantitative data acquired. A reliability analysis was also performed to assess the data's quality and consistency. Finally, multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the fraction of dependent factors that could influence the independent variable.

4. Results

Survey Response Rate: A total of 500 surveys were distributed to respondents who graduated from the Faculty of Business and Management, UiTM in 2020. The researcher then summed the total number of respondents to make the results more reliable. The desired total number of responders, according to Krejcie and Morgan Table (1970), was 310. The total number of returned questionnaires in this study was 349. After 22 outliers were removed, only 327 of the datasets remained valid.

Demographic: Respondents were classified into six (6) demographic groups based on their age, gender, marital status, educational background, current employment situation, and unemployment difficulties. Demographic information provides a historical perspective on the responses. For the demographic variable, the descriptive statistic was used. The following are the findings: 137 graduates (41.9%) were between the ages of 19 and 23, 136 graduates (41.6%) were between the ages of 24 and 28, and 54 graduates (16.5%) were between the ages of 29 and 33. There were 129 men (39.4%) and 198 women (60.65%). According to the table, 327 graduates provided more cooperation and consent to participate in this study. 161 people (49.2%) are single, while 166 people (50.8%) are married.

Next, the highest program was the Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) Finance (BA242) with a total number of 54 graduates (16.5%), followed by the Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) Human Resource Management (BA243) and the Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) Marketing (BA240) with a total number of 32 respondents (9.8%). For Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in Operations Management (BA244) and Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in Insurance (BA241) involved a same total of 30 respondents (9.2%). Thus, Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in Islamic Banking (BA249) involved a total of 29 respondents (8.9%), Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in International Business (BA246) has a total number of 27 respondents (8.3%), followed by Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in Retail Management (BA245) and Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in Entrepreneurship (BA233) with a total number of 23 respondents (7.0%). Next, the Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in Business Economics (BA250) involved a total of 17 graduates (5.2%) and the Bachelor of Customer Service Management (Hons) (BA234) showed a total number of 16 graduates (4.9%) and the lowest number of respondents was in the Bachelor of Office Management (Hons) (BA232) with a totalnumber of 14 respondents (4.3%). In terms of respondents' current employment status, the data shows that 101 respondents (30.9%) were employed, while 226 respondents (69.1%) were unemployed. The statistics under the causes of being unemployed inquiry reveal that 123 respondents (37.6%) are having difficulty finding work. Following that, the findings show that 84 respondents (25.7%) decided to become self-employed, while 83 respondents (25.4%) expressed no interest in working. The lowest result (11.3%) was based on the economic downturn and included 37 respondents.

Descriptive Analysis: Two variables in descriptive analysis are employed in assessing both the independent factors and the dependent variables, namely the mean and standard deviation. Descriptive statistics are very useful for properly concluding data by studying the link between two different variables, which are independent variables with a dependent variable in a specific sample size and population (Yellapu, 2018). Table 1 below shows the mean and standard deviation of the variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis (n=327)

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Dependent Variable		
Unemployment among Graduates	4.1995	0.52592
Independent Variables		
Employability Skills	1.7450	0.43880
Job Mismatch	4.2599	0.54062

Normality Analysis: The analysis is to determine the shape of the distribution; a normality test must be performed. Blanca et al. (2013) state that when the values of skewness and kurtosis for each variable are less than 3, the normality test typically indicates that the data is normally distributed. When the value was less than or equal to 7, it was still within an acceptable range (Hair et al., 2013). Table 2 below depicts the normality results for Skewness and Kurtosis of the variables.

Table 2: Normality Outcomes: Values for Skewness and Kurtosis (n=327)

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Dependent Variable		
Unemployment among Graduates	-0.404	0.261
Independent Variables		
Employability Skills	0.116	0.027
Job Mismatch	-1.652	7.787

Reliability Analysis: The analysis was performed to assess the data's quality and consistency. Cronbach's Alpha value of >0.7 is reliable (Bahammam et al., 2015). Table 3 below shows the Cronbach's alpha values of the variables.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Dependent Variable	
Unemployment among Graduates	0.728
Independent Variables	
Employability Skills	0.804
Job Mismatch	0.832

Multiple Regression Analysis: The analysis attempts to investigate which factor most influenced the graduate's unemployment. The results of the multiple regression analysis utilized in this investigation are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Independent Variables	Standard Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	BETA			TOLERANCE	VIF
Employability Skills	-0.539	9.120	0.000	0.636	1.572
Job Mismatch	-0.237	3.900	0.000	0.636	1.572

R Square	0.391
Adjusted R Square	0.387
F	111.045
Sig. of F Value	<0.000

Dependent Variable = Unemployment among Graduates.

Discussion

H1: There is a significant relationship between employability skills and graduates' unemployment.
It is shown in Figure 4 that the value of Beta = -0.539, *p*-value=0.000. Employability skills have a negative beta value which means the increase in employability skills will decrease the unemployment among graduates. With the *p*-value=0.000, less than the alpha value 0.05, thus, H1 was supported in this investigation. Therefore, results suggest a significant negative relationship between employability skills and graduates' unemployment. Mohd Abdul Kadir et al. (2020), suggested that graduates must possess employability skills to obtain work and compete in the labor market.

The significant negative relationship between employability skills and graduates' unemployment was also validated by Rehman (2014). The findings revealed that a lack of employability skills has an impact on graduates' unemployment in Malaysia and that requisite skills are required to develop graduates who are employable in the job market. The required skills determine a person's capacity to succeed in their profession and become an expert in a specific task or job area.

H2: There is a significant relationship between job mismatch and graduates' unemployment.
It is shown in Figure 4 that, the value of Beta= -0.237, p-value=0.000. With the significant *p*-value=0.000, less than the alpha value 0.05, thus, H2 was supported in this investigation. Therefore, results suggest a significant negative relationship between job mismatch and graduates' unemployment. According to (Razak et al., 2014), job mismatch and graduates' unemployment among graduates have a significant relationship. This happens when a person's qualifications do not match the job requirements.

The significant relationship between job mismatch and graduates' unemployment was also validated by Hossain et al. (2018). The findings revealed that job mismatch has an impact on graduate unemployment in Malaysia since there are many essential skills in the job market and an imbalance occurs between skill demand and skill supply. As a result, over-qualification makes it difficult to get work (Büchel & Battu, 2003). To summarize employment mismatch, too many required skills in the market and over qualifications make graduates more difficult to obtain work (Boulos, 2016).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Two recommendations are made for future research. First, conduct research on other potential factors that may influence graduates' unemployment. The utilization of independent elements such as unreasonable pay, a weak command of English, a lack of digital abilities, and so on. There were limited studies on these factors in the Malaysia setting, hence, thwarted generalization. Aside from that, future research could use the new dimensions to measure the dependent variables.

It is also suggested that higher learning institutions or universities make greater use of these research findings to improve the curriculum and formulate it based on industry needs to improve not only their academic programs but also the personal quality of their graduates. The university may plan additional activities to provide students with opportunities to grow in terms of their communication abilities and personality traits.

Conclusion: The labor market is becoming increasingly competitive. Most graduates must compete with one another by honing a variety of abilities, particularly communication skills, critical thinking skills, and the capacity to operate in a team. All these skills are always valuable while working with organizations,

demonstrating the graduates' excellence. If someone lacks the requisite skills, a higher educational level will not decide whether they are hired. Employers will always search for people who can do their tasks well, not just in theory throughout their studies, but also in reality. Employers are continually searching for graduates with the ability to transition between different sorts of tasks and task-drawing skills.

In this paper, we examine the relationship between employability skills and job mismatch towards the graduates' unemployment. The results show that the variables are significantly associated with the graduate's unemployment, suggesting that graduates should improve necessary skills such as leadership, communication and interpersonal skills (Briones, G. et al., 2021) needed within the industry to land a needed job. Furthermore, findings from this study could serve as evidence that graduates in a certain field are oversupplied and need attention from the Ministry of Higher Education in finding a formula for greater job creation or giving incentives for advanced training to unemployed graduates.

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