

# Work permit rules for foreigners overhauled

THE Department of Labor and Employment's (DoLE) plan to revise the guidelines for issuing Alien Employment Permits (AEPs) is seen as a response to the loosely-regulated entry of Philippine Off-shore Gaming Operator (POGO) workers, labor analysts said.

"The revision is welcome reform. Obviously, it was a response to the POGO controversy. Rationalizing the entry of foreign workers is good policy," University of

the Philippines School of Labor and Industrial Relations Assistant Professor Benjamin B. Velasco told *BusinessWorld* via Messenger.

"We should refrain, however, from othering or discriminating against foreign workers who simply want to have a decent job. Which is also what motivates overseas Filipino workers when they seek jobs abroad," he added. "Mobility for labor, not just capital, should be a right of workers."

Federation of Free Workers President Jose G. Matula said Articles 40 to 42 of the Labor Code about AEPs and the Economic Needs Test (ENT) are the basis for issuing permits.

He noted such measures protect Filipino workers and have the potential to be "highly effective" in safeguarding job opportunities for workers by ensuring that labor market conditions are considered before allowing the employment of foreign workers.

"By carefully assessing whether there is a genuine shortage of skills or manpower in specific industries, the ENT prioritizes hiring Filipino workers, thus protecting their access to available jobs. However, its effectiveness will depend largely on proper implementation, transparency, and regular updates to reflect current labor market realities," he said via Viber.

He noted that industries reliant on local labor, such as manu-

facturing, agriculture, construction and services, are likely to benefit most from the ENT.

"These sectors often have a large pool of Filipino workers who can be tapped if supported with appropriate training and upskilling programs," he noted.

Industries requiring specialized skills or advanced technology, such as information technology and engineering, could face challenges if the ENT creates hiring bottlenecks,

preventing the recruitment of foreign talent to fill gaps that Filipino workers are not yet prepared to meet, he said, adding: "Striking a balance between protecting Filipino workers and addressing skill gaps will be critical."

Department Order No. 248 simplifies and integrates the labor market test and will require hiring needs to be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation. — **Chloe Mari A. Hufana**

## OPINION

### Stress interview or plain bullying?

**T**wo of our managers did a panel interview of an applicant with a perfect professional background. Manager A was professional and pleasant while Manager B came in abrupt and harsh to the applicant during the interview. After that, the candidate informed us he's no longer interested in pursuing his application citing the rude treatment he got from B. He asked: "How could someone work peacefully with that person?" I was at a loss and did not answer. Any advice? — **Rocky Road.**

Are you sure Manager B is not conducting a stress interview? You've got to understand this very well. Many jobs require people to handle pressures and difficult scenarios arising from working with equally difficult colleagues or customers, even on trivial matters. This is the reasoning behind the stress interview.

If you're not sure, better check with Manager B, who may have pulled off the greatest acting job of his life, baffling both you and the applicant. Even if you were not informed beforehand, the next best thing for Manager B is to explain the process to the applicant immediately after the interview.

#### IN THE WORKPLACE REY ELBO

He should have issued a disclaimer right away. However, much depends on the quality of questions that were raised. One irritating question is: "All managers in this organization are graduates of high-end universities. How can you compete with them as a graduate of a provincial university?"

This question is out of bounds.

Also, the timing of the interview is important. Stress interviews should be done only during the second round when you're ready to finalize a shortlist of the top three candidates.

Whether or not it's a stress interview, we must accept the fact that we cannot avoid interacting with people with abrasive personalities.

Therefore, the best approach is for you and the applicant to trust the process. Manage the situation well. If it's part of the process, it's better to conduct a debriefing immediately after the interview to avoid misinterpretation.

However, conducting a stress interview requires careful formulation of questions to help assess how candidates

handle themselves in real, work-life scenarios. It might involve having to work to tight deadlines with minimal resources, managing conflict with colleagues, correcting critical mistakes with customers, and so on. The list goes on and on.

Flowers that bloom beautifully in the mountains often perish if they're planted down the plains. We human beings are just like that. It's important to understand this.

**QUESTIONS**

The first thing to do is to inventory all the difficult situations that may come up on the job. Then, create a list of questions and give them specific weight in percentages starting from the most important down to the least important.

For example, if you're looking for a production manager, define the most critical qualities of applicants that you may want to consider. Use the job description as the basic reference. From there, you can formulate interview questions like the following:

**Supervising the entire production work process.** "Eight out of the 10 machines conk out. Workers can resort to a manual process with a 20% defect rate. How

would you handle the situation only three days before the promised delivery date, with a \$1,000 penalty for every day of delay?"

**Managing production schedules and resource allocation.** "Employee absences and tardiness are common issues in this organization. We have reasonable disciplinary rules against it, yet workers who belong to a militant union continue to violate them. Our line leaders are helpless. What's the best approach to resolving this issue?"

**Implementing cost-saving strategies and techniques.** "The organization is losing money. The former production manager has tried multiple approaches to minimizing the losses. It includes the application of Six Sigma in our operations. And yet, the problems continue to linger. What would you do?"

**TRAP**

Are these questions stressful for you? Maybe not. At least, not yet. That's because some interviewers who are fond of stress interviews can make their first two questions friendly to the applicant. The objective is to make them feel at home.

It is situations like these that could applicants at risk of unwittingly reveal-

ing their true character. In other words, it's a trap. Take question no. 3 above.

An applicant giving an instant answer without understanding the situation is putting themselves at risk with the interviewer who can raise the following stinging questions in a loud, booming, and insulting voice. "How can you give me that kind of (four-letter word) without knowing the full context? Is that the way you solve problems? That's careless, to say the least!"

The best answer to question no. 3 is another question: "Would you like to elaborate on the efforts of the former manager? What makes his effort inadequate in solving the issue?"

Stress is an inevitable part of most jobs. Interviewers use stress interviews to avoid bad hires.

Employers know the risk because if they're not careful in vetting applicants, that will cost them a lot of time, money, and effort.

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