

CLOSING ADDRESS BY MR NG CHER PONG, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SKILLSFUTURE SINGAPORE AND DEPUTY SECRETARY (SKILLSFUTURE), MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AT THE ADULT LEARNING SYMPOSIUM 2016, 4 NOVEMBER 2016, 4.45PM, SANDS EXPO AND CONVENTION CENTRE

Distinguished guests and speakers,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Good afternoon.

1 The 6th Adult Learning Symposium 2016 has been an enriching and fruitful journey. Now that we are at its close, I would like to thank all of you, both speakers and participants, for making this event such a resounding success.

2 We stand at the cusp of major changes to the world of work. Disruptions abound across sectors. Business model **transformation** has accelerated. AirBnB and Uber are examples of how the growth of the sharing economy has enabled them to disrupt the hotel and taxi industries respectively. They did so by allowing costly assets to be shared and monetised. But business disruptions have also occurred when businesses operate at the eco-system level, with prominent examples such as Apple, Alibaba and LeEco coming to mind. They offer products and services across diverse categories, and align their offerings to increase their competitiveness and extract even more value from the eco-system.

3 We also increasingly see chat bots being deployed to replace customer service staff to answer routine queries, and autonomous vehicles will do likewise for drivers. These are examples of **automation** substituting specific tasks that were previously carried out by workers. This is not new – and dates back to the industrial revolution. But even the Luddites in their wildest dreams would not have been able to foresee how far we have come three centuries on.

4 The rise of the **gig economy** is another factor in this equation. According to the study by McKinsey's Global Institute on "*Independent work: Choice, necessity, and the gig economy*", up to 162 million people in Europe and the United States—or 20 to 30 percent of the

working-age population—engage in some form of independent work. This affects how work is increasingly being organised and structured.

5 Learning is also changing, driven in part by changes to the world of work, and in part by technology. A lot has been said about it by speakers over the past two days. So I will not repeat them.

6 Changes to both the Future of Work and the Future of Learning have far-reaching implications, including for the Training & Adult Education (TAE) sector. This is why we developed the TAE Sector Transformation Plan (TAESTP), which the Minister for Higher Education and Skills unveiled yesterday.

7 In an economy that is rapidly restructuring and with emerging skills requirements driven by new technologies, the heightened importance of re-skilling and up-skilling will create many more opportunities as the TAE sector expands. This is particularly so, in light of the national SkillsFuture movement. But just as in many other sectors, the growth opportunities for this sector will not come from doing more of the same. Some of you may ask what these new growth areas are for the TAE sector – and how training providers and adult educators can “re-position for growth” as outlined in the first thrust of the TAESTP. Let me use this opportunity to elaborate on this.

8 We see four broad shifts in the TAE sector. First, corporate-driven training used to be the dominant driver for the market and will continue to be important, but there will be a better mix between corporate and **individual-driven education and training**. More PMETs will be better equipped to take responsibility for charting their own learning and career pathways. At the same time, career switches will become more commonplace - while employers have important roles to play in enabling such switches, these will also be shaped by individual decisions and choices. Training providers will therefore have to decide whether or not to enter this market, and if so, how to serve it well.

9 This is a non-trivial shift. Individuals who decide to sign up for a programme are usually much more committed to the training – as they are paying for it on their own, and often attending such programme comes at the expense of their other personal and family commitments. But the training administration to support such individual sign-ups is also

more onerous. Some of you have experienced this at first-hand when you entered the market for the SkillsFuture Credit earlier this year. For SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG), what is clear is that making available information on training outcomes will become much more critical. Corporates, especially the larger ones, are able to collect information on training outcomes on their own and assess them to make informed choices on suitable training providers and courses. But it is much harder for individuals to do so. So we will have to facilitate their decision-making processes in order to enable this segment of the market to grow.

10 We are also piloting a training management system that can be scaled up and made available to all training providers as SaaS (software as a service). This will make it easier for those that prefer not to buy their own system and get subscription based on pay-as-you-use to this national level system. It will likely be much more cost-effective.

11 Second, **workplace learning**. Learning at work will increase in importance, as the traditional line between study and work, as distinct phases in an individual's life, blurs. Increasingly, workplace learning will complement learning at training institutions and in classrooms. And workplace learning will take different forms, for example OJT, mentoring by supervisors etc. It is most effective when learning at the workplace and at training institutions is integrated. Companies especially SMEs may also require support to build up their capacity to deliver workplace training. Training providers should consider how to play a meaningful role in this.

12 We will identify opportunities for training providers to be involved in this, such as expanding the Earn & Learn Programme to private providers beyond the polytechnics and ITE. IAL has also developed the Learning@Work portal which contains resources and tools developed to support professionals and enterprises in workplace learning diagnostics and pedagogies. Besides the online portal, IAL's learning specialists have spearheaded various programmes to help organisations drive authentic learning at their workplaces. For example, The Ascott Limited, one of the world's leading serviced residence operator from Singapore, has partnered IAL on a "Leading through Coaching" programme over a six-week period for their guest service staff. The intervention programme, which was conducted at their premises, has reaped fruits, as staff become more motivated and empowered at work and as communications has strengthened between staff and

supervisors. Most importantly, it has led to better customer satisfaction. Again, drawing from IAL's experience, this entails a shift in the operating model for training providers that are keen to expand their businesses into this new area.

13 Third, **technology-enabled learning**. I have spoken at length about this on other occasions, so I will not elaborate on this again today. Instead, I will like to reiterate how much blended learning has grown in importance. This is why we rolled out iN.LEARN 2020 with one of the key focus on this. Under the plan, we built iN.LAB, which is operated by IAL, to catalyse the adoption of blended learning, and we have seen good progress being made. For instance, our media production rooms now enable users to develop video and multi-media content for courses. Another highlight is the proof-of-concept of the Total Online Learning Solution project, which provides an integrated platform to design, develop and deliver e-learning programmes among other capabilities. Eight organisations have participated in this proof-of-concept project, and we are looking at expanding the involvement.

14 IAL has also been organising the "Innov" series at iN.LAB. Every activity in this series is centred on a key stage in the open innovation process, from ideation to development and prototyping. InnovPlus, for example, is an exciting platform where organisations with learning issues work with solutionists and technologists to create learning innovations. In our inaugural run of challenge, three teams have won a prototype development grant of up to S\$200,000 each to develop their projects further. The next InnovPlus to be held later this month will see eight new and intriguing solutions being put forth seeking to address learning challenges through innovations. We look forward to seeing the fruit of such collaborative projects and efforts seeded at iN.LAB.

15 But it is not the use of technology per se, but how it is used purposefully to enhance the effectiveness of learning and transform learning. I urge those who have not started on this journey to do so, and iN.LAB is committed to supporting you in your efforts.

16 Fourth, looking **beyond training**. For companies, training alone seldom solves their business challenges. The operating and business context is important. There is an excellent article in last month's Harvard Business Review with a controversial title "Why Leadership Training Fails – and What to Do about it". Let me quote from this article: "For

the most part, the learning doesn't lead to better organizational performance, because people soon revert to their old ways of doing things." We can extend this argument to many areas and types of training.

17 Some companies are interested in buying an integrated solution package to enhance their business performance, rather than training services on its own. And some training providers are therefore transforming to become Business Training Consultancy firms instead. SSG will facilitate and support this. One example is the Asian Culinary Institute, or ACI. Our starting premise is that there is limited value in training many more individuals to enter the Asian culinary sector if workplace practices and conditions deter individuals from joining the sector. For example, if Chinese kitchens continue to insist on the use of large heavy woks, females (or males without the strength to lift these woks) would find it hard to work in that environment. That excludes roughly half the potential labour market. Pumping in more resources to increase training places and the quality of programmes would not address the manpower shortage. So, as part of ACI's mandate, it works closely with restaurants to support their workplace transformation – with training bundled as part of the overall solution. We see significant scope for more training providers to take on such an expanded role. So, do approach us to discuss your views on this if you wish to talk through how we can come in to support your expansion into non-training related business areas

18 But none of these four shifts can take place without the right manpower and skills. So, it is important that we continue to develop and professionalise the pool of adult educators, and it is a key focus for SSG.

19 IAL has been stepping up on this front, particularly with the delivery of the Advanced Certificate in Training and Assessment (ACTA) and Diploma in Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) courses now centralised at IAL. The curriculum is been reviewed from time to time and delivery is constantly strengthened to cater for the needs of learners. But IAL is not limited to running these two courses. It has also been building up a suite of Continuing Professional Development programmes, adding more than 40 new programmes since the beginning of this year such as the Certified Workplace Learning Specialist and workshops on e-learning. In addition, there are now four Masters programmes to cater to a wide range of needs. IAL will continue to introduce new

programmes and initiatives particularly in these areas of technology-enabled and workplace based learning, in support of the refreshed TAE Professional Competency Model.

20 Also, under the Adult Educators' Professionalisation initiative, there are currently more than 150 Associate and Specialist Adult Educators who have been recognised and we will be commencing nominations for Adult Educator Fellows soon. We hope to build a strong and robust pool of adult educators, which will raise the professional image of this community.

21 In 2017, IAL will be moving to the Lifelong Learning Institute, the heart of training and continual learning. IAL will do more, so that it will be a strong and supportive partner for all of you, in support of this transformation of the TAE sector.

22 Let me conclude. The biennial ALS has once again brought our community together, as we learn from the best-in-class experts and practitioners in our own pursuit of lifelong learning and capability development. Whether we are able to build a vibrant and dynamic TAE sector and culture of lifelong learning in Singapore rests upon the calibre of our TAE professionals. I strongly urge our TAE professionals and organisations to work and partner us to overcome the challenges. Seize the opportunities and draw on the resources and support available. Let's co-create our future TAE landscape together for the future of work, and the future of learning.

23 Thank you.