

**SPEECH BY MR TAN CHUAN-JIN,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR MANPOWER AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AT THE ADULT LEARNING SYMPOSIUM 2012
“NEW FRONTIERS IN LEARNING AND WORK”**

5 JULY 2012, 9.00 AM, RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and I am happy to be here with you this morning.

I have been with the Ministry for Manpower for over one year, and am very glad to see the Continuing Education and Training (CET) sector evolve. CET is critical as it trains and develops our workforce against a rapidly changing economic landscape. Our focus is always on our people and our goal is simple, to help Singaporeans upskill, perform better, get better jobs, and to maintain this virtuous cycle. However, the process is complex. Amongst the many parts that need to work together, it includes expanding industry collaborations, deepening our CET delivery and offerings, and enhancing employment facilitation.

As we strengthened and developed our CET system, we also decided to establish the Institute for Adult Learning (IAL), to build up a pool of CET professionals. IAL has done well. It has trained more than 8,000 CET professionals over the last three years and every one of them is able to in turn help us train and develop the rest of our workforce.

Today, I am very pleased to congratulate the first batch of 12 graduands from the Master of Arts in Lifelong Learning with the renowned Institute of Education, University of London, together with 80 graduands of the WSQ Diploma in Adult and Continuing Education.

Developing T-shaped CET Professionals

For every Singaporean, learning must be a lifelong endeavour and we will support that effort. One cannot and should not stop learning. Likewise, a company cannot stop developing its people. Singapore is amongst the most open, dynamic, competitive and global economy. Therefore, our CET must continue to evolve and keep up with the rapid changes in global manpower and businesses. With technologies constantly improving, product life cycles getting shorter and ongoing economic restructuring, it is important for the workers to constantly upgrade their skills and knowledge to support productivity growth, as well as seize opportunities in new growth areas. I would also emphasize that it is also as much about professional pride and individual growth as it is about staying economically relevant.

This underscores IAL's efforts to strengthen the development and effectiveness of CET Professionals, including the review of the Training and Adult Education (TAE) WSQ Framework to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness over the past year.

In its engagement with CET Professionals here, IAL found that many are taking on diverse roles in training and development, i.e. intermobility. One of today's graduands in Master of Arts for Lifelong Learning, 53 year-old Dr Koh Yang Huang, a Principal Consultant at the Health Promotion Academy, is one of them. She is a CET professional who teaches. She is also a mentor to her trainees. She designs the curriculum. What's more, she doubles up as a Workforce Development Specialist and a Human Resource Developer, based on the nature of her responsibilities and role in her organisation.

There are also Adult Educators like Siti Hawa of Mendaki Sense – she is a trainer and curriculum developer with different job functions within one job role i.e. “intra-functional mobility”. She works with low-skilled, low-wage workers to help them raise their skills. Her training involves exploring various methods of how to manage a class of trainees with different levels of proficiencies and backgrounds, up-scaling curriculum development to address specific employment goals of the learners, and even drawing – as part of the ‘show and tell’ approach to training.

A New Competency Development Model

As the examples of Dr Koh and Siti show, we can no longer expect a specific job scope to stay with us throughout our career. Nor can we expect to develop a specific expertise that will remain industry relevant throughout our economic life. Instead, cultivating inter- and intra-functional skills will allow us to stay mobile in our career and enable us to move easily into other job roles and across industry sectors. This is what we often refer to as the “T-shaped Professionals” and CET Professionals, too, must be “T-shaped” with deep expertise in a core area, and broad horizontal skills to handle the myriad challenges of developing a diverse workforce.

With their “T-shaped” skills, CET Professionals will naturally be better able to raise the skills of the workers they train, which in turn will raise the skill standards of the entire workforce. IAL plays a pivotal role here to grow the capabilities of our CET professionals – to help them further improve and be more effective. In consultation with the Training and Adult Education Manpower Skills and Training Council, IAL has developed a new competency model for the CET industry to do so.

From today, there will be a new Training and Adult Education Professional Competency Model¹. This means CET Professionals who have more than one role in a single job description (“inter-mobility”), like Dr Koh; or those with different functions within one job role (“intra-functional mobility”), like Siti; will be offered flexible upgrading pathways to develop as all-rounded T-shaped Adult Educators who are not just trainers, but also courseware developers and assessors too.

¹ For information on the Training and Adult Education Professional Competency Model, please refer to the Annex that is attached to the press release on the said model, issued on 5 July 2012.

They will develop four sets of key skills:

- 1) First, as an Adult Educator – training and developing CET for the workforce;
- 2) Second, as a Training Management Professional managing CET programmes, curriculum, and even manpower, among others;
- 3) Third, as a Human Resource Developer to deliver CET plans and engage workers for their training needs; and
- 4) Fourth, as a Workforce Development Specialist, to develop and implement competency frameworks and models, as well as accreditation and audit.

12. With the expansion of the TAE Professional Competency Model, some 20,000 training practitioners and HR developers can now use it to chart their career path, whether to scale up within a chosen expertise, or to explore new horizons by taking on different roles.

Conclusion

What does this mean for the community and industry as a whole? It's certainly an exciting start as the new competency model will bring a more inclusive CET professional community – one where you, as a CET Professional, will chart new frontiers in learning and work, one where you will be recognised for the value you contribute to the industry. You will also be more empowered to chart your own careers through the Model, whether as an educator or for employers to plan and anticipate staff as well as organizational training needs. Each of you will be directly shaping the industry's developments with your own CET journey, and as you develop Singapore's workforce.

As a Government, we have invested great resources in our CET system, because at the end of the day, we believe that there are many Singaporeans out there who are striving to do better, for themselves and their families. Some may have had a slower start in life, some may not have been dealt a fair hand in life, but that does not stop them from wanting to do better. Through CET, we hope that we can give them that ladder to climb higher and fulfil their lifelong aspirations. However, we cannot achieve this without individuals like Dr Koh, Ms Siti Hawa and all of you present here who perform your duties as CET professionals with great dedication, passion and courage. While many may not directly see your efforts, I would like to assure you that your contributions will not be forgotten by the lives you have touched.

It is with this recognition of the important work that you do that I hope the two-day symposium will inspire all of you to strive towards “New Frontiers in Learning and Work” – to develop as T-Shaped CET Professionals, and work hand-in-hand with employers, workers, WDA and IAL, to bring our national CET system forward to a new frontier – one that is first-world and first-class, for a skilled workforce. Here's wishing you a fruitful learning journey ahead.