

**OPENING ADDRESS BY MR TAN CHUAN-JIN, MINISTER FOR MANPOWER
AT THE ADULT LEARNING SYMPOSIUM 2014
“TRANSFORMING CET: INNOVATION IN WORKPLACE PRACTICE AND LEARNING”
RAFFLES CITY CONVENTION CENTRE, 10 JULY 2014, 9.15AM**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning.

I wonder how many of you have watched the movie “Edge of Tomorrow”? I strongly recommend it. It is a lot of fun but it tells us something about our topic today.

In the show, the lead character played by Tom Cruise is forced into a battle against aliens. He dies shortly after he enters the battlefield. But he wakes up again to repeat the cycle. And again. And again. He doesn’t understand why, but he realises that he needs to learn to stay one step ahead of the game. Soon, after many repeats, he meets Emily Blunt who puts him through Continuing Education and Training. He trains hard and attains his WSQ (Workforce Skills Qualification) in killing aliens. And of course, being a Hollywood movie, they CET themselves till they save the world. Go watch the movie!

The Importance of Lifelong Learning

As individuals, we all know that we grow as people only because we are always learning. When we stop learning, we stop growing. It is the same with our society and our workplace. The world is changing very fast. It offers vast opportunities to those who adjust, learn and embrace those changes. But those who don’t, they rapidly become obsolete.

For us in Singapore where our only resource is our people, it is imperative we nurture a pervasive lifelong learning culture to ensure that our people and society remains responsive, relevant and resilient.

Evolution of Singapore’s CET Ecosystem

While there had always been an emphasis on education and training, we formally launched a CET Masterplan in 2008 to build a CET system that would enable sustained economic progress and increase the skills competitiveness of our workforce over 10 years, and to also lay the foundation for the bound after that.

I believe we have made good progress. We had increased the CET institutional training capacity about six-fold, from 22,000 to 120,000 workers. Over the last five years, we have trained more than a million workers under the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) system, and developed a network of over 450 approved training organisations in more than 30 industries to cater to the different needs of the workforce. More recently this year, two CET campuses have also been built – the Lifelong Learning Institute at Paya Lebar and the Devan Nair Institute of Employment and Employability at Jurong – to deliver dedicated one-stop services in training and placement to our workforce. We have built a strong foundation in our CET ecosystem. It is now time for us to move to the next phase of our CET journey.

Good Adult Educators – Key to Achieving Quality CET

As part of the CET Masterplan review, the Institute of Adult Learning (IAL) conducted a Training & Adult Education (TAE) sector survey earlier this year. The survey examined business models, industry practices, work organisations and skills utilisation and reviewed how the performance and quality of CET professionals could be enhanced.

The survey showed that more than 90 per cent of the employers felt the adult educators they engaged were well equipped to deliver training under WSQ. This is a testament to the professionalism of our adult educators, and also reflects the impact of the qualification requirements imposed by WDA on our adult educators, to raise their proficiency in training delivery.

E-learning underpins the Future CET Framework

In the highly connected world we live in today, e-learning will become a staple that underpin our future CET framework. E-Learning enable our workers to skill up in a more targeted and effective manner, and offer companies more possibilities to enhance the capabilities of their workers. Many training providers recognise this potential. In fact, over 50 per cent of them are now offering blended learning training which melds classroom facilitation techniques and e-learning.

E-learning also makes learning easier by making the learning process flexible, mobile and efficient. Enhancing training mobility also allows us to meet the increasing demand for “just-in-time” skills acquisitions that are affordable and easily accessible. Let me share two examples of adult education providers which have demonstrated innovative delivery in training through e-learning.

Genashtim Innovative Learning is a Singapore company that decided to develop and launch its own brand of online learning programmes. One such programme, the EPiC Online, allows live one-on-one, face-to-face English language coaching service. EPiC Online can be further customised with role play and actual problem scenarios to help e-learners to practise English in their work situations. This e-learning programme has been adopted by multinational companies such as McDonalds and Holiday Inn Singapore to train their staff and

SIM University (UniSIM) is a university for working adults. UniSIM adopted e-learning as an integral part of their teaching and learning from as early as 2006, and has progressively rolled out various initiatives to support this effort. Via the Learning Management System (LMS), all UniSIM students can flexibly access their learning material, interact with fellow learners and instructors, as well as submit assignments and check their grades online. A virtual classroom facility integrated with the University’s LMS enables instructors to conduct synchronous online sessions with learners at remote locations. Learners can participate in a “live” class through an online environment and have the opportunity to access the recorded sessions at a later stage for remedial purposes. UniSIM now has 28 per cent of their courses with interactive contents, specially designed for access via mobile devices – an approach most suited for working adults. UniSIM is on track to offer 50 per cent as blended learning by 2015.

Building Capabilities of Adult Educators to be e-Learning Ready

E-learning is a good solution but we also need to ensure that our adult educators are technologically attuned and ready to embrace e-learning. To help build such capabilities, IAL has embarked on the development of the CET Massive Open Online Courses or MOOC to help prepare our training community to be e-learning ready.

Piloted in June this year, these CET MOOC lessons cover Instructional Methods, Adult Learning Theories, Workplace Literacy and Advanced Facilitation Techniques. A total of 40 CET MOOC lessons have been created as the first series of CET MOOCs centred on adult education and pedagogy for adult educators.

To facilitate the adoption of e-learning, IAL is also setting up a portal, “LearningSpace.SG”, for individuals to use as a single point of entry to search for e-courses developed by Singapore-based CET providers, hosted on multiple platforms either locally or overseas.

Strengthening the CET Infrastructure with Technology

On the infrastructure front, IAL is developing a flagship facility called “iN.LAB”, for CET partners and practitioners to foster a self-sustainable eco-system. iN.LAB will provide a conducive and creative environment for collaboration, experimentation and application of innovative, pedagogical as well as cutting edge learning solutions that would benefit the CET community. Currently, IAL is undertaking research and consultations and we welcome industry leaders and experts of the field, to give ideas in co-creating the iN.LAB.

To adequately prepare CET professionals to be future-ready, IAL has also taken steps to improve its adult educator and learning programmes. For example, the recently revamped WSQ Advanced Certificate in Training and Assessment (ACTA) has placed a stronger emphasis on technology through the incorporation of e-portfolios, to prepare adult educators for the e-learning landscape. The WSQ Diploma in Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) is also being reviewed to enable learners to develop effective courseware and curriculum that incorporates technology elements.

In support of the e-learning landscape, IAL has also tied up with various CET partners to offer its LMS to support their blended learning programmes. IAL’s LMS currently hosts courses from the Social Services Institute and Republic Polytechnic, in addition to IAL’s own range of course. Collaborations have been successful with good uptakes, and we encourage other training providers to join the e-learning bandwagon.

Good CET Professionals Form the Backbone of our CET Ecosystem

Among the community, there are many encouraging stories of how our adult educators are future-oriented, and actively upgrade themselves to deliver best possible training to our Workforce. I would like to share two examples.

The first is that of an ACTA graduate, Ms Yao Lan, who trains kindergarten teachers who teach the Chinese language. She encourages teachers to create and use educational blogs to communicate with parents and students. She also introduces them to educational websites, and acquaints them with mobile applications and softwares to deliver courses innovatively. After completing the e-learning module in DACE last year, she applied what she learnt and developed two 30 minutes e-learning materials for one of the modules of the Chinese version of ACTA, as part of her assignment for the programme. I think she will be future ready as an adult educator.

Another successful ACTA graduate is Mr Raja Chowdhury, a training management professional working at Lithan Hall Academy – a registered private education institution. Mr Raja Chowdhury is currently working on a “just-in-time” learning model, to enable adults and organisations to have access to learning ‘anytime and anywhere’ – above and beyond face-to-face interactions in class. He believes that by making course contents available online or through various info-communication channels, it will allow learners to be able to grasp

concepts first, so their time in class can be better used for personalised guidance, and to apply what they have learnt remotely. The first programme based on this learning model will be ready in the next six months.

Conclusion

Our CET system can only be as good as our people who run it. These people are you all who are gathered here today. I encourage all of us here today to take this opportunity to learn about the various innovative CET practices that our distinguished speakers will be sharing, and be inspired to adopt and further create innovative ways of learning.

With this, I wish you a fruitful learning experience at the Symposium.

Thank you.