

OPENING ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR LEE WING ON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR ADULT LEARNING & PROFESSOR, OFFICE OF PRESIDENT, SINGAPORE UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AT THE LIFELONG LEARNING SYMPOSIUM: NEW IMPERATIVES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING, 1 JULY 2019, 9.00AM, LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

Mr Tan Kay Yong
Chairman, Lifelong Learning Council

Professor Cheong Hee Kiat, President, Singapore University of Social Sciences,

Dr Michael Fung, Deputy Chief Executive for Industry, Chief Human Resource Officer and Chief Data Officer of SkillsFuture Singapore

Mr Tan Wee Beng, Deputy Chief Executive for Operations & Regulations of SkillsFuture Singapore

Mr Raul Valdes-Cotera, Team Leader at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

INTRODUCTION

1 Good morning. Welcome to the Lifelong Learning Symposium: New Imperatives for Lifelong Learning, jointly organised by the Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, or UIL in short. First and foremost, I will like to thank UIL for choosing to partner with IAL, and this collaboration will be a significant milestone for the development of lifelong learning both internationally and in Singapore.

2 There is a world consensus now that lifelong learning is important in almost every education system. There is increased realisation for the need to enhance access to learning opportunities for every citizen. Lifelong learning contributes to levelling up the quality of human resources and the country's international competitiveness. These include strategies to provide learning facilities and all formal and informal learning

opportunities for all. To achieve this, learning support including blended learning, technology-enabled learning, open source knowledge bank and cutting edge education innovations are essential in enabling a learning environment that individuals can learn anytime and anywhere, whenever they need and want to learn.

LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE EYES OF ADULT LEARNERS

3 Singapore sees lifelong learning as the core to workforce development. Through the government's strong advocacy, strategic investment, and establishment of IAL to carry out the mission of penetrating lifelong learning in the workforce, we have seen the work-learn culture in enterprises and the larger society starting to grow, with the ultimate aim of transforming Singapore into a Learning Nation. Under the guidance of SkillsFuture Singapore Agency, lifelong learning has begun to take root in the society. Nowadays, Singaporeans increasingly see the value of integrating continuous learning as part of life and a way of life. New pedagogical and learning approaches are emerging, such as blended learning and learning-on-the-go. All these are to enhance the intrinsic motivation for adult learners to recreate and empower themselves to continuously learn in the workplace and continuously upskill themselves, so that they are well equipped to face the fast-changing and uncertain future economy. Lifelong Learning Index may become a key indicator of strength for the future economy.

THE COMING TOGETHER OF IAL AND SUSS IN ADVANCING THE LIFELONG LEARNING AGENDA

4 The Singapore government has made two significant moves to forward lifelong learning. In 2017, the University for Lifelong Learning - the Singapore University of Social Sciences or SUSS was established. Since 1 April 2019, IAL has come onboard the SUSS network. The coming together of these two institutions, the former as an Autonomous University and the latter as an Autonomous Institute of SUSS has provided a strong message to the Singapore society – Lifelong learning is a significant government agenda, and lifelong learning may even be the pillar of the future economy, which is fast-changing and unpredictable. The only way to survive in this new mode of economy is to keep learning, and keep on renewing our skills.

IAL'S COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH IN LIFELONG LEARNING

5 At IAL, we are committed to contributing to the research agenda for training and adult education. An example of such efforts is the Skills and Learning Study, in short SLS. For SLS, we made a first attempt to develop a lifelong learning framework and collect baseline data to measure the current state of lifelong learning amongst the adult population in Singapore. This lifelong learning framework draws on Delor's four pillars concept, to reflect the modes of learning in relation to "formal education", "vocational training", "personal development" and "social cohesion". This framework and its derived index have since been endorsed by Singapore's Lifelong Learning Council and used as a reference to guide their work in promoting learning to senior citizens.

6 IAL is also working with SkillsFuture Singapore agency and other leading universities to conduct research on how to improve adult learning, as well as participating in the National Research Foundation's (NRF) initiative on the Science of Learning.

WORKING TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL AGENDA FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

7 Today's symposium lines up international and local speakers and participants from across various disciplines. With multiple lens and perspectives, I look forward to a rich sharing and extensive exchange of ideas, expertise, and experiences; so as to collectively broaden our understanding and deepen our insights on what we can do to foster a lifelong learning culture in society and transform the future society into a learning society. Riding on what we will achieve through this platform, IAL and UIL are planning to further this dialogue to jointly develop indicators for lifelong learning, which will be a booster for this arena to be assessed systematically.

8 On this note, I will like to encourage all of you to actively share your views and valuable inputs across these two days and play a part in shaping the lifelong learning of tomorrow. I wish everyone a fruitful symposium.

Thank you