

OPENING ADDRESS BY MS GAN SIOW HUANG, MINISTER OF STATE (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION) AT THE ADULT LEARNING SYMPOSIUM 2020 (LIVE), 13 AUGUST 2020, 9.00AM

1. Welcome to the Adult Learning Symposium (ALS) 2020 (Live). For the first time since its inauguration in 2008, ALS is being held fully online. The Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) has leveraged technology to bring the conference to more than 1,000 participants from within and beyond the Training and Adult Education (TAE) sector. In these extraordinary times, we have to get used to a new way of working, learning, and a new format for conferences. This makes the conference theme, "Digitalising Learning: The New Normal" especially apt today.

Tackling the Headwinds Brought On By COVID-19

2. We are in the midst of a 'mighty storm' – as Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat described COVID-19 earlier in March. These headwinds will persist for the near future, and will bring about tectonic shifts in the economy. Today, we already see a fundamental transformation of the workplace and classroom. The push for businesses and organisations to digitalise and shift online has accelerated. In the months ahead, we may even see the pandemic reshaping entire industries and supply chains across the globe. In the midst of all this change and disruption, there has never been a stronger need for workers to adapt by shifting into new job roles and picking up new skills. We must draw upon all our ingenuity and resilience to weather this storm, adapt quickly, and emerge stronger in the post-COVID future.

3. To enable workers to reskill and adapt, the Government has rolled out numerous training support schemes in the past few months. We have introduced the Enhanced Training Support Package to help businesses retain and upskill workers, and launched the SGUnited Jobs and Skills Package to provide job opportunities and skills training. Here, the TAE sector has a pivotal role. TAE professionals – whether you are an Adult Educator, Learning and Development specialist, or learning solutionist – are instrumental in delivering these skills through training opportunities.

Transforming the TAE Sector With Three Key Shifts

4. The TAE sector itself will not be spared from the disruption that workers and businesses across Singapore are experiencing today. But as with all changes, there will be significant growth opportunities, as long as all of us in the TAE sector come together to re-position the sector for the new normal.

5. To do so, I would like to suggest that the TAE sector consider three main shifts. First, there needs to be an even stronger nexus between training and industry, with more training being led by industry and conducted at workplaces. Secondly, TAE training providers need to accelerate the shift towards online learning by adopting digital systems and solutions. Thirdly, the TAE ecosystem needs to be strengthened by further raising quality and reducing red tape, so that we can develop local champions in TAE for the domestic and overseas markets. SSG and IAL are fully committed to supporting training providers and TAE professionals in making these three shifts.

Shifting Towards Learning at the Workplace

6. The first shift that the TAE sector will need to make is to further strengthen the nexus between training and industry. This is part of our efforts to strengthen the enterprise pillar under the next bound of SkillsFuture.

7. The success of our Train-and-Place (TnP) programmes are a testament to the importance of strengthening the link between training and industry. Let me give some examples. At-Sunrice GlobalChef Academy includes apprenticeships with established restaurants as part of its training programmes, and several of its alumni have gone on to establish their own Michelin-endorsed restaurants after completing their apprenticeships. 3dsense is another successful training provider. It has built up strong relationships with leading media and animation studios worldwide, and has scored placements in the media industry for close to 90% of its trainees.

8. Our Adult Educators themselves have also benefited from the opportunity to train at workplaces and learn from experienced industry professionals. Since 2018, IAL has been pairing up Adult Educators with owners of TAE companies, or "Edupreneurs" under the Adult

Educators mentorship programme. Budding Adult Educators gain real work experience by working alongside their mentors, and many have gone on to become Edupreneurs themselves. To date, over 120 new Adult Educators have successfully completed the mentorship programme.

9. Beyond placement and mentorship programmes, companies need to do their part to continuously train and develop their own workers. Many companies are keen to do so, and we have established several National Centres of Excellence for Workplace Learning (NACE) to support these companies. We will launch a new NACE centre at IAL later this year to focus specifically on Adult Educators. In particular, NACE@IAL will equip our Adult Educators with the skills needed to help SMEs build up their internal training systems.

Shifting Towards Digitalisation

10. The next shift that the TAE sector has to make is to accelerate the pace of digitalisation. During the Circuit Breaker, to keep everyone safe and healthy, many of us had to make a rapid shift towards working from home, as well as conduct lessons online. IAL led the way by moving to full online learning for all its programmes and continuing professional development courses, allowing 1,700 learners to continue benefiting from IAL's programmes within the first month of the Circuit Breaker period.

11. To build capacity for training providers in the pre-school and TAE sectors to offer more online learning, SSG, together with the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), Enterprise Singapore (ESG) and the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) have pre-approved Digital Learning Platforms with Productivity Solutions Grant (PSG) support. Training providers can use such platforms to create and deliver digital content to learners online anytime, anywhere. Eligible training providers can receive up to 80% funding support on qualifying costs until 31 December 2020. On top of the Productivity Solutions Grant, TAE training providers can also benefit from IAL's new InnovDev initiative, which will be launched in September this year. Over the next three years, the initiative targets to pair 200 training providers with experienced digital curriculum developers, who will help build the capability of curriculum teams to digitalise the content and delivery of training programmes.

12. Adult Educators will also get help to make the shift towards online learning, through IAL's Moving Offline to Online Rapidly, or MOTOR, Initiative. The MOTOR Initiative includes a series of resources, guides, and short courses for Adult Educators to learn different techniques and digital tools that they can use to deliver online learning more effectively.

13. But the digital transformation of the TAE sector needs to go deeper than providing more online learning. TAE training providers, just like businesses across Singapore, need to fundamentally digitalise your organisations in order to unlock operational efficiencies, streamline routine processes, and glean insights from data. To help training providers digitalise, I am pleased to announce that SSG and IMDA, with support from IAL, will be launching the TAE Industry Digital Plan (IDP) today. As part of the SME Go Digital programme, the TAE IDP was designed in consultation with industry partners to guide SME training providers in their digitalisation journey. It offers an easy-to-use, step-by-step guide to help training providers adopt digital solutions at each stage of their growth.

14. In addition to the Industry Digital Plan, SSG collaborates with private sector partners to provide training providers with digital solutions for their back-office operations as well. One such solution is a cloud-based Software-as-a-Service Training Management System, developed by ST Engineering. The system, also called Skilleto, offers training providers an affordable pay-as-you-use platform to digitalise processes, and is integrated with SSG systems for seamless grant administration.

Shifting Towards a Strengthened TAE Ecosystem

15. The final shift that the TAE sector needs to make is to further strengthen the quality of the TAE ecosystem. To achieve this, SSG will take the lead in reducing red tape, enhancing regulatory levers to raise quality, and providing curriculum guidance for training providers.

16. In terms of reducing red tape, SSG rolled out the enhanced EduTrust Certification scheme for private education institutes at the start of this year. This has reduced annual compliance costs by about \$55,000 for each institute.

17. SSG will also do more to support training providers in keeping their curriculum relevant. For example, to provide training providers with the latest guidance on which soft skills are currently in high demand, SSG has updated and replaced the existing Generic Skills

Competencies with 16 Critical Core Skills. These 16 soft skills were identified based on a scan of skills which were highly valued by employers across a range of industries, such as effective communication and critical thinking. Training providers can refer to this new Critical Core Skills framework as a guide when incorporating soft skills into their curriculum.

18. With these efforts to strengthen the TAE ecosystem, I am confident that together, we can develop our local training providers to become champions of adult education in Singapore and abroad.

Conclusion

19. The impact of the pandemic has been felt worldwide and its effects are likely prolonged. But, if we can work together as a sector and step up to the task of adapting to change, we will be able to seize the exciting new possibilities and emerge stronger in the new normal. With this, I am pleased to declare ALS 2020 (Live) open.