

**ADDRESS BY MR TAN KOK YAM, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SKILLSFUTURE SINGAPORE
& CHAIRMAN, INSTITUTE FOR ADULT LEARNING COUNCIL AT ADULT
EDUCATORS' DAY 2024, 12 JULY 2024, NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING**

Mr Ng Cher Pong, Chief Executive Officer, National Library Board

Associate Professor Yeo Li Pheow, Executive Director, Institute for Adult Learning

Fellow Educators, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Good morning, everyone. Happy Adult Educators' Day!
2. Only this Tuesday, at the launch of the SkillsFuture Forum, Minister for Education Mr Chan Chun Sing reminded us of the role and place of the SkillsFuture movement – as a key pillar of our social compact. What does that mean in direct terms? It means that upskilling must create value for the learner, open new doors for him, and raises his worth to the company as an employee.
3. None of this lofty ambition is achievable without a skilled, competent and dedicated pool of adult educators. You, we, are in the building business, confidence building. Whether it's someone taking on a leadership role for the first time, or using a new software tool, or transiting to another job role or an altogether different industry, you are there to build his confidence. And more collectively, we are here to build the confidence of the employers, to hire the person who you trained, or to give him different or added responsibility. This is why SkillsFuture Singapore is focusing so much on getting employers to recognise skills and to recognise training that you deliver. But the real pressure is on you, who are on the frontline, working with your learners, building them up.
4. Allow me to suggest that the response of the adult educator profession will need to be three pronged: number one, quicken the pace of our own learning; two, deepen our skillsets; and three, broaden our community.

QUICKEN

5. The business of adult education is at the receiving end of a double whammy. Learners' needs are evolving rapidly, with rapid changes first to the suite of technology tools that they need to master for their work, and to the work processes and business models as they too evolve with technology. At the same time, the training delivery itself will be transformed, and some roles may even be disrupted.

6. To raise the community's technological confidence, IAL has been proactive in refreshing its content to include new tools powered by AI, such as on AI-driven data analysis and digital content creation. Two such courses are: (1) *Jumpstart Your Learning Design with Generative AI!* and (2) *Supercharge Your Learning Design with Generative AI!* I was told that the IAL team rolled out more than 10 classes for each of these 2 courses over the past year, and it is heartening to hear that all are fully subscribed. To meet learners' needs, IAL rolled out two more new short courses recently: (1) *Empowering Assessment with AI and Technology*, and (2) *Using ChatGPT to Design Errors for Learning and Teaching (DELETE™): Building Learner's Capabilities in a GenAI world*. I think it's safe for IAL to anticipate similar high demand too.

7. But the larger point is that the adult education community itself needs to upskill regularly and stay not just in touch but ahead of the movements and developments in the workplace. IAL has registered a 40% increase in enrolment in Continuing Professional Development courses, from 454 in 2022 to 754 in 2023. That's not bad, but let's target for a thousand by next year.

DEEPEN

8. It's not just about the use of new tools, or new techniques, important as these are. Fundamentally, the adult education profession must begin to build its own interpretation, approach and doctrine of the "co-pilot" concept. Where it is best for technology to come in, where it is best for face-to-face, human delivered interaction to come in?

9. Earlier this year, the government unveiled the SkillsFuture Level-Up Programme, with the aspiration to make adult learning pivotal to career health and progression. As I have mentioned, training must equip learners with new skills and know-how, as well as instill the confidence in them to pursue new roles, tackle higher-order tasks, or approach existing tasks differently. It must also give employers the confidence to entrust these learners with new responsibilities.

10. All these mean that adult educators must deepen both in the understanding of industry practice, and in andragogical practice, such as designing learner-centric curricula, applying effective facilitation techniques, and assessing learning outcomes. You will have to spend more time engaging your client companies, and even learning from your learners, to understand the emerging issues and challenges they face.

11. One area to deepen in particular is in career guidance, or career facilitation. How do we help the learners see beyond their immediate job role, and appreciate how their skills and experience can be further developed or honed to become a more valued member of the workforce? We should try to enmesh such guidance into our adult education. I have asked IAL to consider how best we can build this capability across the profession. It might not be another course per se, but perhaps dialogue and discussion among the community first.

BROADEN

12. One of the things that I find extremely encouraging is to see established industry experts and company leaders not only take up ACLP and other IAL courses, but also move on to become IAL's active collaborators as workplace consultants, adjunct educators, innovation partners and drive AEN's Special Interest Groups. All these networks beyond the classroom demonstrate our AEs' strong societal commitment to supporting the nation's lifelong learning pursuit.

13. I am also very pleased to see more lecturers from Institutes of Higher Learning join our network. There is a lot we can learn from them, with their considerable expertise and teaching experience. At the same time, in our IHLs, the institutional challenge is in

adapting well-oiled Pre-employment Training (PET) practices, to Continuing Education and Training (CET). The adult learner is more heterogeneous, he hates math and essays even more than the teenage student, he is in many ways more demanding, because really, he is not bound to an exam system, he has plenty of real work experience that can be tapped. So, I think the learning can be mutual and dynamic.

14. It is important that we continue to broaden the adult educator community and strengthen the networks. A nation of learners needs a nation of teachers. As we make learning more accessible, we must also democratise the ability and responsibility to train. IAL is working actively to expand our outreach to our small and medium enterprise townships, industry mavens or skilled tradesmen. We will also broaden our industry track to induct more individuals into the community of adult educators.

CONCLUSION

13. So, in conclusion, quicken, deepen, broaden. SSG will apply the same pressure on ourselves, to quicken our administrative response and enable innovation, deepen our own understanding of the sector, your challenges and opportunities, and broaden the ecosystem so that both individuals and companies will trust our CET system even more.

14. We certainly cannot do this without allies. Today also, we are signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Library Board (NLB). NLB has been a huge supporter of lifelong learning. One key aspect of this MOU is to allow adult educators in our network to use the library spaces as a platform to conduct workshops, seminars, or networking sessions for the public. We hope that the increased touchpoints will make it easier for working adults to access learning opportunities in adult learning curricula and create more opportunities for aspiring and existing adult educators to learn from and with one another.

15. With this, it leaves me only to wish you a great time together, and to thank IAL once again for the initiative and energy in bringing us together.