

**ADDRESS BY MR TAN KOK YAM, CHIEF EXECUTIVE,  
SKILLSFUTURE SINGAPORE & CHAIRMAN, INSTITUTE FOR ADULT  
LEARNING COUNCIL AT THE IAL GRADUATION CEREMONY 2022,  
22 JUNE 2022, 3.00PM, STEPHEN RIADY AUDITORIUM @ NTUC**

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Professor Robbie Goh, Provost, Singapore University of Social Sciences

Dr Lee Tong Nge, Deputy Executive Director, Institute for Adult Learning

Distinguished guests

Graduands

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 Good afternoon.

2 Graduation ceremonies, I think, are all about being thankful. I know some of you graduands are just thankful for not having to do any more homework from IAL for a while!

3 But on a serious note, you have reached a personal learning milestone, you have overcome challenges, you have attained new qualifications, new knowledge and new skills. Today, take a moment to thank the people around you that have made that possible. Your family members, who encouraged you and tolerated your study routines; your employers who gave you flexibility to manage your time; your lecturers and facilitators in IAL, who did their utmost to guide you on your learning; and last but not least, thank one another, for being companions in the

learning journey, for the discussions, the mutual sharing, the joint projects, the honing of one another.

4 On behalf of the IAL and SkillsFuture Singapore, it is now my turn to thank you, the graduands.

5 First, I understand that there are a few among you who completed your WSQ Diploma in Adult and Continuing Education programme as early as 2019. The pandemic has delayed your graduation ceremony and you only have the opportunity to receive your well-deserved certificate in person today. For this group, I want to thank you for your patience.

6 Second, most of you here did the bulk of your course during the COVID-19 crisis. You are the COVID-19 graduating cohort, and while it does not really sound like the best branding pitch, I hope you do wear that with pride. Just as these two years have been extraordinary for the world, and for our society, your learning journey must have been extraordinary as well.

7 During these challenging times, you have persevered and navigated the different, sometimes unfamiliar, modes of learning. You have adapted to online platforms and virtual coursework. You have not just worked from home, but also learnt at home, on top of caring for your family amid the stresses and uncertainties brought on by COVID-19. Years later, when no doubt friends, family and colleagues will gather together and ask, “so what did you do during the 2020 pandemic?”, you can say, with pride, that you are the pioneering batch of a new way to learn. As with all pioneering journeys, things are not all smooth-sailing. So I thank you, graduands, for your foresight and persistence, not just to see through the pandemic, but

to challenge and upgrade yourself even at this time, to open new doors for the future.

8 Your willingness to learn and to adapt is exemplified by your fellow graduand, Ms Della Ng. A curriculum designer, Della saw the need to upskill and stay current, so she decided to pursue the WSQ DACE programme. That she was based in Australia did not deter her and she took the challenges of time zone differences and virtual learning in her stride. The institute made arrangements for hybrid lessons while a classmate used her laptop to facilitate Della's participation in breakout discussions via Zoom. I want to quote Della here, "The best part of the learning journey was in developing the ability to be creative and think out of the box, to come up with new approaches for both my elective courses. This included designing surveys for data collection and analysis, e-learning with video clips, and hosting virtual classes for an actual client who was delighted with the results." I am glad that Della enjoyed the learning and found it fruitful and fulfilling.

9 Here, allow me also to recognise the efforts of IAL faculty and staff. Within a short time, they pivoted to the new normal of restrictions in movement and gathering. As in-person facilitation became limited, IAL quickly adopted virtual platforms for learning, and worked closely with trainers to adapt to new ways to teach. IAL faculty and staff thought hard, and worked hard, to minimise delay and disruption to your learning, and to support the needs of both facilitators and learners.

10 There is a final thing that I would like to thank the graduands for; and that is simply your dedication and commitment to becoming a better adult educator. I spoke about online platforms and digital learning.

Technology provides us useful, even necessary tools. But there can be no doubt in our mind that both teaching and learning are fundamentally a human endeavour. At its core, to learn well, we need people who can teach well and inspire confidence and learning, who understand both the content and the learners. That has to be true whether these learners are pre-schoolers, polytechnic students, or working adults. A nation of lifelong learners therefore requires a line-up of excellent adult educators, curriculum designers, andragogy experts, training and development specialists. And it is people like yourselves who are charting the way forward.

11 I don't say all this just to express our appreciation of you, but also to remind you that this business of adult education will become increasingly challenging, and important, for our fellow Singaporeans in the workforce. The last two years show how fast the workplace can change. But even without COVID-19, the writing is on the wall. New skills are being demanded, while existing skills become obsolete quickly.

12 Consider your bus technician, who may soon have to swop from transmission belts to dealing with python scripts when diagnosing electronics of electric buses. Or the compliance officer in a company, who already has to grapple with rules ranging from data protection to carbon footprint management. Or the modern factory manager, who now oversees not conveyor belts, but IOT and cloud-based control systems.

13 At the Ministry of Education, we call this the shrinking half-life of skills. So just as our antibodies need new vaccines to cope with new viruses, our workforce needs booster shots of skills from time to time, to not just cope with a more dynamic global environment, but to upgrade and

open new doors for ourselves, just as you have done. If we do lifelong learning well, the adaptability, versatility and resilience of our workforce can become a national advantage for us. We need Singaporeans to be open and willing to learn continuously, we need our companies to understand and invest in their employees. And we need excellent institutions and adult educators to impart the learning.

14 This is why your role is key, and your willingness to upgrade yourselves heartening and inspiring. Training and Adult Education professionals are the ones who will equip our workforce with the necessary skills. You are the ones who will guide enterprises, whether as employees or as consultants, to incorporate robust training plans into their human resource development programmes. Most importantly, you are the ones to inspire and give confidence to Singaporeans, that no-one is too old to learn, and nothing is too new to be learnt.

15 In discharging these responsibilities, you yourselves will need to embrace new techniques of tracking learning progress, develop new learning content that are hybrid or blended, engage learners online and offline. You will have the IAL's support in your continuous development, and I hope that, as a community, you can continue to support one another as well. Stay in contact, make use of one another's experience, and make use of IAL as a resource centre in the practice and research of adult education. Join the Adult Education Network, engage in the communities of practice that IAL organises, stay tuned for the launch of new programmes.

16 IAL, on its part, will have to continue to innovate. In recent months, it has launched the Master in Boundary-Crossing Learning and

Leadership and Graduate Certificate in Workplace Learning, in collaboration with SUSS. It has established a National Centre of Excellence for Workplace Learning (NACE@IAL) to empower workplaces to become places of learning. IAL is committed to pushing boundaries, enabling innovation and driving excellence for adult education in Singapore.

17 Graduands, thank you once again for your dedication to your profession, your belief in lifelong learning, and your keenness to improve yourselves. I wish each of you the best in your endeavours, and collectively, may we succeed in building an adult education sector that will serve Singaporeans well, that will raise up our companies, and that will enable our country and society to thrive amid change.

Thank you