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The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated many large-scale societal, economic and technological trends, and this will have lasting effects on how people live, work and interact with one another, said Education Minister Lawrence Wong.

To better prepare students for this fast-changing environment, the Ministry of Education (MOE) will adopt four main strategies, he said yesterday.

It will step up efforts to maximise opportunities for disadvantaged students, build multiple pathways for students to hone their strengths, help them develop attitudes and skills beyond book knowledge, and focus more on interdisciplinary learning.

Mr Wong said there are major trends that are already under way that will continue to accelerate, such as online shopping, digital entertainment and virtual communications. These trends will surely continue after Covid-19, he added.

"There will be unequal recovery across industries and countries, post-pandemic, and there will surely be lasting effects on how we live, work and interact with each other for the foreseeable future."

MOE has four strategies for post-Covid world

Education Minister says it will prepare students for fast-changing environment



Mr Lawrence Wong said the way forward "is to continue to emphasise our competitive advantage and our human strengths".
TNP PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

able future."

He was speaking on the future of education at the first session of a webinar series by the National University of Singapore (NUS).

The NUS115 Distinguished Speaker Series, with the theme

Shaping The Future, celebrates the university's 115th anniversary.

Mr Wong said MOE's first strategy is to double down on ongoing efforts to maximise opportunities for disadvantaged students. The Govern-

ment will increase investments in research and development to guide such efforts.

"We want to invest more to even out the differences early in life, and give children full access to appropriate health, learning and developmental support,"

he said.

The second strategy is to ensure that institutions have, and continue to build on, multiple pathways for students to hone their strengths.

"We have long recognised that every child is unique, and we need different approaches to help them learn and grow," Mr Wong said.

He noted that over the years, there has been a wide range of options for students.

For example, schools such as the NUS High School of Math and Science cater to those with specialised interests.

For those who thrive in a more practical, hands-on learning environment, there are schools such as Crest and Spectra Secondary.

This multiple pathway approach must also extend beyond schools to tertiary education, Mr Wong said.

BEYOND BOOK KNOWLEDGE

Third, students will need to develop attitudes and skills beyond book knowledge.

"The way forward for us is to continue to emphasise our competitive advantage and our human strengths," he said, citing skills such as the ability to build relationships with one another and to collaborate and work in teams.

The fourth strategy is to push for more interdisciplinary learning to support career mobility and "prepare Singaporeans for a more dynamic and uncertain future".

But he cautioned that it is important to get the balance right.

"We don't want to swing from one extreme to the other. Subject specialisation is still necessary and will still be important," he said.

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Review to ensure ITE, poly grads are prepared for working world

Second Minister for Education Maliki Osman will be leading a review to see what more his ministry can do to ensure graduates from the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) and the five polytechnics are prepared for the working world.

Announcing the review yesterday, Education Minister Lawrence Wong said it will be important to ensure the graduates "acquire deep skills and competencies that are well matched to their interests, and also the needs of employers and the industry".

More information on the review will be shared later.

Mr Wong said diverse pathways for

students is a major strength that Singapore must continue to uphold.

"Around the world, too many countries have shifted to an overly academic model of tertiary or university education," he said.

"I think in Singapore, we have been fortunate to avoid some of these imbalances, because we have paid a lot of attention over the years to our technical and vocational training. That is why we have always said that ITE is the jewel in our education system."

The "gold standard" for technical and vocational training is Germany, he noted. It has a dual-track system where

students complete a three-year apprenticeship with a company – spending about half their time learning on the job, and the other half in a vocational training school.

Such a system, undertaken by about half the cohort in Germany, is regarded very highly by society, he said.

Singapore, too, has started work-study programmes in the institutes of higher learning, especially in ITE and polytechnics.

ITE now offers 24 work-study diploma programmes, which are apprenticeship-based programmes with 70 per cent of the course delivered



Second Minister for Education Maliki Osman will be leading the review.
TNP FILE PHOTO

through structured, on-the-job training.

Mr Wong said: "They are an important applied pathway for students to learn, acquire deep skills and relevant work experience. We are starting from a strong position, but there is still more that can be done in this space."

Mr Wong was speaking at the first session of the NUS115 Distinguished Speaker Series, organised by the National University of Singapore. – JOLENEANG