

# MOE to adopt 4 strategies to equip students for post-Covid-19 world

Jolene Ang

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 which 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.”

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 Government 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 like Crest and Spectra Secondary.

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

He noted that there is now a range of varied and high-quality institutions here, with the six autonomous universities as well as specialised institutions such as the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.

Strong skill and vocational pathways are also anchored by the polytechnics and Institute of Technical Education.

“This diversity is a major strength, which we must continue to uphold,” he said.

Third, students will need to develop attitudes and skills beyond

book knowledge, Mr Wong said.

“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.

Pupils will learn to do this from primary school, he said, noting that the ministry has freed up time for them by removing assessments and examinations in certain years.

With that time, educators will focus on developing 21st-century competencies, including core values like respect and resilience, and skill sets like critical thinking.

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.

“But at the same time, we must

think of individual disciplines as the different branches on the tree of knowledge. The branches are constantly growing and producing new twigs. But remember, we are ultimately part of the same tree.

“We must nurture the ability to see the broader connection of things and to work seamlessly across different disciplines. Because often, it is in the borders or the gaps between disciplines where we find opportunities for new discoveries and we can advance the frontiers of knowledge.”

jolenezl@sph.com.sg

[SEE THE BIG STORY • A8](#)