

The Straits Times says

Educating students for the future

Education is a whole-of-society effort in which companies could partner academic institutions more closely to produce good learners who would be better workers as well. This should be one of the goals of Singapore's education system as it continues to meet the challenge of producing versatile and agile students who would be assets in a swiftly evolving global economy. This is one of the key takeaways from Education Minister Chan Chun Sing's comments on Thursday at the first session of Singapore Perspectives 2023, a conference organised by the Institute of Policy Studies on the theme of work. Clearly, since the nature of work is changing globally, so must the degree of preparedness that countries possess in equipping their young for the job

market. Singapore, which has registered one of its chief successes as an economy by preparing sound educational foundations for its young, cannot afford to fall behind now.

One important aspect of economic transformation is that lifelong jobs, held in a single company and even within a single profession, are a relic of the past. Instead, the education system is called upon to produce students who see learning as a lifelong process that stays in tune with the changing requirements of the economy. Since companies are best placed to know what those economic demands might be, companies must not wait for perfect workers to turn up on their doorsteps.

Instead, business organisations must see

themselves as active partners in shaping the interests and skill sets of students early. That would mean working with academia to train workers, an effort that would have to continue even after employees have joined the workforce. The objective for companies should be to train workers so that, even amid short-term disruption in the business cycle and longer-term economic uncertainties, Singapore would possess an irreducible pool of educated workers who could make the transition from job to job and thereby provide a fresh stream of talented labour across the business spectrum. Poaching from one another in a stagnant talent pool would be short-sighted for companies. Academic insti-

tutions on their part must redesign their teaching methods to meet the needs of adult learners. Teachers must remain lifelong learners themselves.

Of course, for holistic progress in the education system to occur, students must display a spirit of inquiry and a desire to create value instead of depending on conventional benchmarks of professional success such as grades. Grades are important, no doubt, as points of entry into the job market, but no more than that. The global workplace is being driven by the converging energies of the information economy. Singapore's students must plug themselves into the opportunities of that economy.