



Attending the Singapore University of Social Sciences' 14th anniversary celebration yesterday were (from left): Institute for Adult Learning executive director Lee Wing On; SUSS president Cheong Hee Kiat; Senior Minister of State for Education Chee Hong Tat; SUSS board of trustees chairman Richard Eu; Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam; Minister for Education Ong Ye Kung; SUSS chancellor Stephen Lee and SUSS provost Tsui Kai Chong. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

# SUSS and IAL team up to advance adult education

## Tie-up will help S'pore become a global leader in lifelong learning: DPM Tharman

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Many countries are on a journey to help their citizens develop a culture of lifelong learning, but none have emerged as leaders in this field yet.

Singapore can be at the forefront of this endeavour with its SkillsFuture movement, said Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam yesterday.

And the latest collaboration between the Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) will make a "powerful vanguard" in the Re-

public's journey, Mr Tharman said at the university's 14th anniversary celebration, held at its Clementi Road campus.

Singapore is still at an early stage of the SkillsFuture journey, he stressed. Like other countries, it has a lot to learn, but Mr Tharman expressed confidence that the merger will provide a boost.

As of April 1, the IAL has been restructured as an autonomous institute in SUSS.

Both will work to advance the field of adult learning through research and developing new courses for adult educators, among other plans.

SkillsFuture is Singapore's "most

important economic and social strategy in the long term", said Mr Tharman.

On the economic front, Singapore is only as competitive as the skills it has, he said, adding that a worker must continuously deepen existing skills and pick up new ones throughout his or her career.

On the social side, Singapore is trying to create a meritocracy of skills – rather than grades earned early in life – as a new form of social mobility.

Singapore also wants to develop a new social culture, where people gain satisfaction from learning at every stage of life – regardless of where they start – as well as from mastering the skill and being part of a community of learners, he added.

"Internationally, there is no real leader in this endeavour. Different

countries are adopting different approaches, we are learning from each other," said the Deputy Prime Minister, who is also the Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies.

He gave the example of Denmark. Since 2017, the country has built into the collective agreements between its employers and trade unions, as well as the obligation for employers to design and invest in training for their workers and give them time off for it.

Canada recently also introduced a training benefit after studying different approaches, including Singapore's SkillsFuture initiative.

Turning to the strengths of SUSS, Mr Tharman noted that it offers flexibility in course structures and in creating clusters of modules that meet industry needs; as well as having lecturers from the industry

come in to teach courses.

It is also on the "cutting edge" by recognising workplace learning and accrediting it, he added.

Established in 2008, IAL develops expertise among adult educators and bases its practices on research, Mr Tharman said.

Through the collaboration, IAL can further its research into how adults learn by drawing on new data regarding SUSS students' learning experiences, as well as design new courses for adult educators.

The two organisations can bring together their enterprise networks and curate courses that are relevant to the needs of organisations, "not just learning opportunities that are for the sake of a national programme", he said.

"We are creating a very powerful vanguard in our SkillsFuture journey that will bring a lot of understanding as to how adult learners learn best," Mr Tharman said.

This vanguard will work with the rest of the ecosystem – including other educational institutions and unions – to take things to the next level, he added.

"Singapore must be very good at this, and we can be in the lead internationally," he said.

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