INITIATIVE TO COST S$12 MILLION

Keep learning but try to be a master of your field: Ong Ye Kung

NUS has launched new school to promote lifelong learning opportunities among adults

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SINGAPORE — In pushing for a culture of lifelong learning, Singapore’s challenge is not about people changing careers too often, but convincing them to have the “gumption and interest” to stay on course, dive deep and master one area of expertise, Acting Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) Ong Ye Kung said.

He was speaking yesterday at the official launch of the School of Continuing and Lifelong Education (Scale) at the National University of Singapore (NUS) — which marks the first of the SkillsFuture centres network to be set up.

The S$12 million initiative, aimed at promoting and expanding lifelong learning opportunities among working adults, will offer undergraduate certificate and graduate diploma courses, bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes, as well as short courses and executive programmes.

Mr Ong added that getting industry-standard certification is not to merely “fuel a paper chase”.

“We hope to underscore an idea pertinent to lifelong learning: That after you graduate, the next upgrade need not be a degree, master’s or PhD. Rather, this could be a certificate or diploma.

“It will be an upgrade in real practical terms, to stay abreast of industry developments and changes in technology, or to deepen existing skills and be more competent at work,” he said, adding that he hopes Singaporeans may gain “opportunities to develop mastery and deep skills in (their) area of interest and passion”.

Nearly 1,000 adults have enrolled under the school’s first core offering in the engineering field, the Bachelor of Technology (BTech) programme, on a part-time basis. Ten courses in the engineering disciplines, which may be accumulated towards a BTech degree, will also be rolled out progressively in August.

The school will offer executive development programmes such as specialisation certification courses in niche industries, and short courses for professionals. For instance, Scale will partner NUS’ department of social work to provide continuing education for social work practitioners.

The programmes will be designed in close consultation with agencies such as the Singapore Workforce Development Agency and the Economic Development Board to ensure they meet the industry needs and demands.

Customer care officer Chan Pei Wen, 26, took up a four-year course in industrial and management engineering at Scale to improve her skills. She attends classes thrice a week in the evenings and said she looks forward to taking on management roles in future.