

ADDRESS BY DR LAW SONG SENG, DIRECTOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF ITE, AT THE ITE GRADUATION CEREMONY 1994 HELD AT THE KALLANG THEATRE ON MON 31 OCT 94 AT 1500 HOURS

Our Guest-of-Honour, Minister without Portfolio, Prime Minister's Office and Secretary-General of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), Mr Lim Boon Heng, the Chairman of ITE Board of Governors, Mr Eric Gwee, Board members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the ITE Graduation Ceremony 1994.

2 We are indeed honoured to have the Minister without Portfolio and Secretary-General of NTUC, Mr Lim Boon Heng, as our Guest-of-Honour for today's function. On behalf of ITE, I thank the Minister for his presence at this year's ITE Graduation Ceremony.

ITE Graduates 1994

3 Today's ceremony marks the graduation of 6,360 graduates, comprising 5,908 full-time students and 452 apprentices who have completed training in ITE for the training year 1993/94.

4 Among the ITE graduates this year are 448 who will be receiving their Certificate of Merit (COM) for having distinguished themselves in their courses of study. Ninety-nine of these Certificate of Merit recipients will also be awarded medals for their outstanding performances.

5 On behalf of ITE and all our staff, I extend our congratulations to all graduates and award winners.

ITE In Transition

6 The Institute of Technical Education is an institution undergoing transition. Established as a post-secondary institution in 1992, in response to changes in the education system, our mission is "To maximise the human potential of Singaporeans through excellence in technical education and training so as to develop the quality of our workforce and enhance Singapore's global competitiveness."

7 The process of restructuring started in 1992. Our vision is to establish ITE as a post-secondary institution with its own identity - an institution well-accepted by employers, parents and the public and committed to meet the needs of school leavers and workers. More importantly, as a young institution, ITE needs to earn its recognition as an equal among post-secondary institutions in Singapore. This is

the long-term challenge facing ITE management and training institutes.

8 In managing this transition, the ITE will, over the next 4 to 5 years, continue to consolidate itself as a major provider of post-secondary technical training. As an integral part of the national education and training system, our target is to train 25% of a school cohort or an annual intake of 10,000 GCE 'O' and 'N' level school leavers by 1998 or an enrolment of 16,000 students through full-time and apprenticeship programmes. About 35% of this intake will come from the new Secondary Normal (Technical) course which started in schools in Jan this year. The first batch of school leavers from this course will only join ITE in Jan 98 after completing their secondary education.

9 The strategies and plans for upgrading the technical training system were formulated when ITE was established in 1992. The main objectives were to develop a post-secondary technical training system which better meets the needs of school leavers and Singapore's economy. Among the new features were greater flexibility to match the interests and aptitude of school leavers through apprenticeship and permeability through progression linkages to tertiary education.

Progress Made

10 Today, I would like to share with you the progress and results which have been achieved in the areas of apprenticeship training and progression of ITE graduates to the Polytechnics.

Apprenticeship Training

11 First, the apprenticeship or 'earn as you learn' scheme. Since 1992, 21 new apprenticeship training courses have been introduced including areas such as Agrotechnology, Process Operation and Control, Health Care and Office Skills. Many of the apprenticeship courses are not available under full-time institutional training system. There are currently 60 courses available under apprenticeship. Now that the system is well-established, there is scope to further extend apprenticeship to other areas required by industry.

12 The number of school leavers taking up apprenticeship training has also increased. Since the New Apprenticeship System (NAS) was launched in Oct 90, a total of 5500 school leavers have taken up apprenticeship training. The annual apprenticeship intake increased from 1000 in 1990 to 1550 in 1993 or by 55%.

13 The number of companies participating in apprenticeship training has also increased from 209 in 1990 to over 600 in 1993 or an increase of 190%. The support of the large number of companies and range of courses have made it

possible to better match the interest, aptitude and career aspirations of school leavers.

14 Apprentices have also performed well in the job market after their training. An ITE study in 1993 showed that National Technical Certificate Grade 2 (NTC-2) apprentice graduates drew a median monthly salary of \$1100, compared to \$900 for graduates of full-time NTC-2 programmes, or a premium of more than 20%. This is because besides his knowledge and skills, an apprentice graduate would have the advantage of knowing the work environment, practices and culture of the company and is therefore a more productive and valuable member to the company.

15 Let me now move on to the area of progression of ITE graduates to the polytechnics.

Progression of ITE Graduates

16 ITE graduates who perform well are able to progress to tertiary education at the polytechnics.

17 The progression linkages for ITE graduates from the Industrial Technician Certificate (ITC), Certificate in Business Studies (CBS) and National Technical Certificate Grade 2 (NTC-2) courses to the polytechnics were formally established in 1991. Those who possess ITC and CBS with Certificate of Merit can enter the Polytechnics with exemption from the first year of the diploma courses. Others with good results can be admitted to the first year. NTC-2 graduates with Certificate of Merit now also have the opportunity for a polytechnic education. They will enter the first year of the diploma courses.

18 Since the formalization of the progression linkages, close to 1000 ITE graduates have taken up full-time courses at the polytechnics. In the latest July 94 intake, some 370 ITE graduates were admitted. This is an increase of 232 or 168% over the intake of 138 in 1991.

19 ITE graduates have generally performed well at the polytechnics. A study in 1993 showed that 50% or one out of every two ITE graduates are among the top 25% of each cohort of intake in the polytechnics. Some did exceptionally well. As an example, in the May 94 examinations at the 4 polytechnics, of the 144 ITE graduates who completed their studies, 15 performed outstandingly and were awarded the Diploma with Merit.

20 The results are encouraging. But more importantly, the success of these students and the ITE system provide the hope, motivation and opportunities for many others in schools to want to do well and upgrade themselves. Some of our graduates who have done well at the polytechnics have even progressed further to universities.

Conclusion

21 Besides the two areas I have highlighted today, there are other initiatives and plans at various stages of development. Overall, good progress has been made. With continuing focus and efforts, the infrastructure and linkages will be in place before 1998. The ITE system offers many opportunities for a post-secondary education through full-time training, apprenticeship programmes and part-time Continuing Education and Training. In line with our mission, the ITE will continue to create new training opportunities for our school leavers and workers.

22 On this note, let me once again congratulate all graduates and award winners. May I wish you every success in your future careers.

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