

**SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE,
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION, AT THE MICROSOFT REGIONAL ASIA PACIFIC
INNOVATIVE EDUCATION FORUM, ON TUESDAY, 9 MARCH
2010 AT 10.00 AM AT SHANGRI-LA HOTEL**

Ms Jessica Tan, Managing Director, Microsoft Singapore

Mr Jean-Francois Rischard¹ (pronounced as *zhahn frahn-swah rish-ahd*)

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

INTRODUCTION

1 I am happy to join you today at Microsoft's annual Asia Pacific Regional Innovative Education Forum. To our guests and participants from abroad, I warmly welcome you to Singapore.

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¹ For SMS' info - Mr Jean-Francois Rischard is the keynote speaker for the event. He is a freelance international consultant and the former Vice-President of the World Bank.

I am sure all the participants are looking forward to the next few days as you share exciting new teaching methods enriched by technology and learn from some of the best educators in the region on how to empower your students with the tools for life-long learning.

TRANSFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH TECHNOLOGY

2 It is apt that this conference focuses our attention on transforming education through technology integration, and the need for collaboration amongst educators around the world. Technology has the power to dramatically transform both learning and teaching practices, while bridging classroom learning with the real world.

3 In Singapore, we have been encouraging schools and teachers to use technology creatively in their lessons to enhance learning for today's students. Singapore has one of the highest Internet penetration rates in the world, with more than 1.4 million residential households subscribing to broadband internet. As a result, our students are digital natives, having grown up with access to technology and are familiar with the power of online collaboration.

Those born in the new millennium expect technology to be in everything they do, and learning is no exception.

4 This poses both challenges and opportunities to teachers. Beyond employing traditional teaching methods, they need to be cognizant of the constantly evolving digital landscape and how new technologies can be incorporated into the classroom environment. Teachers also have to keep abreast of new and available pedagogies to engage the diverse profiles of our students.

CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP WITH MICROSOFT

5 MOE and Microsoft have been working in partnership for the last six years. Through this collaboration, many initiatives to further

harness the power of technology to improve learning and teaching in Singapore have been advanced. Such initiatives include

BackPackLive!, FutureSchools@Singapore, the MOE-Microsoft Professional Development Award (MMPDA) and Classroom of the Future (COTF) LIVE!.

6 COTF LIVE! is a centre dedicated to modeling, testing and showcasing technologies for use in teaching tomorrow's children. This centre, located in the National Institute of Education, facilitates sharing of best practices in the use of IT in schools, collaborations and demonstrations of learning concepts, prototypes and applications. Since its launch, COTF Live! has hosted more than 8,000 visitors including teachers and school leaders from Singapore, as well as educators from around the region.

ICT IN EDUCATION TODAY

7 In 1997, MOE started the first ICT Masterplan as part of our Thinking Schools Learning Nation vision.

8 This Masterplan laid the foundation in extending the reach of technology into all our classrooms. It focused on fundamentals like providing schools with basic infrastructure such as computer laboratories, hardware, network and educational software packages. It also looked into the training of the teaching workforce.

Teachers then had to be equipped with basic skills in the use of word processing and presentation software in order to start using ICT in their lessons.

9 This was by no means an easy feat. While many teachers now embrace the use of technology in classrooms, the situation was different back then. Many teachers were not familiar with the PC and did not believe that computers would make an impact in the classrooms.

10 With the fundamental issue of PC literacy of teachers being addressed, we embarked on the second ICT Masterplan in 2002. We gave schools autonomy to plan, budget and implement their ICT infrastructure to support their own schools' teaching and learning goals. We also created schemes like FutureSchools@Singapore and LEAD@ICT to encouraged selected schools to run ahead of the pack in the use of technologies. In our midst today, are some of our teachers who participated in such schemes in their schools. Do seek them out during the conference so you can tap their experience.

11 We are now onto our third Masterplan for ICT. This Masterplan aims to move beyond the infrastructural network of schools. It seeks to broaden and deepen the integration of ICT in the teaching and learning of the various subjects. We hope to see continuous improvement through the sharing of good teaching practices so that teachers will benefit from their peers' experiences. MOE is making it easier for teachers to pool their ideas and share their resources through online sharing platforms such as ICT-Connections, which highlights good ICT lessons, and iSHARE, which is a resource repository system that enables schools to search and share their resources within school clusters.

12 Most importantly, we are moving beyond the use of technology as tools for efficiency. We are looking deeper at how ICT enables our students to develop important 21st century competencies that are essential for their future. More time will be devoted in the curriculum to develop skills like self-directed and collaborative learning over the next 5 years. MOE will also be stepping up cyber-wellness programmes in schools to encourage the responsible use of ICT among students.

CONCLUSION

13 There is little doubt that technology has played a major role in how we view education today. ICT has created a teaching and learning environment that is dynamic and, at the same time, exciting for both teachers and students. We would put on record our thanks to Microsoft for their contributions to the field of education in Singapore.

14 On this note, I hope that the educators present here today will be inspired to take on the challenge of enhancing technology in the classroom to better enable our students to tackle tomorrow's challenges.

Thank you.

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