

SPEECH BY MELVIN YONG, NTUC ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL AT THE CLOSING DINNER OF THE GLOBAL ENGINEERS LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME HELD ON 11 OCT 2019 AT REGENT HOTEL

IES President, Professor Yeoh Lean Weng

Dean, NUS School of Continuing and Lifelong Education

Professor Wei Kwok Kee

Distinguished guests

Sisters and brothers from the inaugural intake of the Global Engineers Leadership Programme

Good evening.

1. I understand that it has been an intensive five days of learning for our GELP participants. During this period, you had to participate in a mix of seminars and workshops, perform case studies, go on a learning journey to Changi Airport, and complete a capstone project.
2. So, I am glad to see that everyone here has managed to 'survive' the week. I also hope that many have made lifelong friendships that will serve you well in the future.

3. Let me take some time to explain why NTUC, IES, and NUS SCALE have come to put this programme together.

Industry 4.0 Landscape Needs Multi-Disciplinary Engineering Leaders

4. The field of engineering has changed significantly since my time as a student. I remember that when I was in school, the best students chose to study engineering. In the years after, many students sought after non-engineering courses that they find offer more lucrative jobs. But from speaking to Prof Yeoh, I understand that engineering is once again trending in popularity among the brightest students in Singapore.
5. During our dialogue session with Senior Minister Teo on Wednesday, we discussed how Industry 4.0 has significantly changed the engineering profession. As the NTUC's Supervising Lead for the Manufacturing Cluster, I visit companies, big and small, every week. Employers are increasingly looking to hire 'superhuman' engineers, preferably one who has a wide range of engineering expertise (electrical, mechanical, chemical, civil, etc). But that alone is not enough, they hope that their engineers can also perform data analytics, be good at cost management, and possess good communication and marketing skills!

6. And so, I dutifully went to check with our training institutions. The polytechnics and universities tell me that it would not be practical as it would take more than a decade to train and produce such a “super” engineer!
7. Companies therefore need to have multi-disciplinary teams at the workplace, and they need engineering leaders who are able to lead such teams. To help our engineers to take on such jobs, NTUC has partnered with IES to create a new progression pathway to develop engineers throughout their various career stages, and groom them to become leaders of their industries.
8. Let me briefly touch on what we do for engineers in each of their career stages.

Young Engineers

9. For young engineers, most of them fresh out of school or have only spent a couple of years working, they often leak out of the engineering sector because of the lack of a clear progression pathway.

This is why NTUC and IES jointly developed the Engineers Progression Pathway in 2015, to provide engineers with a long-term career development plan, raise standards in the local engineering field and groom a strong pipeline of engineering leaders for Singapore.

10. As part of this progression pathway, young engineers enroll in the Young Engineers Leadership Programme (YELP), where they go through various management workshops, learn the basics of how to manage a team, and work on their soft skills. Since its launch, the YELP has been very well received, with every run oversubscribed. Till date, over 600 young engineers have graduated from the programme.

Mid-Career Engineers

11. For mid-career engineers with more years of experience, NTUC and IES developed the Advanced Engineers Leadership Programme (AELP), which focuses on equipping our mid-career engineers with the necessary skills to manage and lead a team effectively. As part of the programme, participants are provided with one-to-one mentorship sessions with senior leaders from the industry.

12. For those working in the electronics and precision engineering cluster, one of our unions – the United Workers of Electronic and Electrical Industries (UWEEI) has signed MOUs with all 5 polytechnics and the 3 ITEs to help our workers adapt to new technologies brought about by Industry 4.0. Through the many Company Training Committees that we have formed, the union helps to identify the training needs of our workers, including mid-career engineers, and work with the IHLs to curate and develop training programmes based on industry’s needs. Through such tailored training programmes, we help our mid-career workers outpace disruption.

C-Suite Level Engineers

13. Finally, for engineers in senior positions, we have created the Global Engineers Leadership Programme (GELP). Many of you are leaders in your respective fields and I hope that you will eventually progress into C-suite executives.

14. For senior executives like yourselves, the Labour Movement also recognises the need to help you develop and progress in your careers. Thus, we structured the GELP to allow you to gain deeper appreciation and awareness of future engineering trends in an Industry 4.0 environment.

Conclusion

15. In conclusion, let me reiterate the point that was brought up during our dialogue session on Wednesday. Disruption is inevitable and it affects all of us in the working population – regardless of age, from rank and file workers to PMEs.

16. To deal with disruptions, there can be two options. We can either “wait and see” or we proactively shape the future. In Singapore, the NTUC works closely with our tripartite partners to proactively look out for disruptive trends, develop training initiatives to help you outpace disruption, and help you progress in your career. We want to be able to shape the future. We want to prepare our workers in advance for tomorrow’s jobs. We want to leave no one behind as our companies aggressively adopt new technologies and transform their businesses. **To the Labour Movement, Every Worker Matters.**

17. And because you matter, I hope that our graduates today have benefitted greatly from the GELP. You are the first, and you will certainly not be the last. We hope that you will be generous with your feedback so that we can continue to improve on the programming to better serve future participants of the programme.

I wish each of you all the best in your careers and I look forward to welcoming some of you back some day as mentors and speakers for future programmes.

18. Thank you and have a great evening.