

## Will You Keep Learning, Just for Learning's Sake?

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WHETHER it is folding a towel into the shape of a bunny, or picking up tips on how to be a better leader, the Government wants Singaporeans to be curious to learn new skills – both for personal fulfilment and better employability.

The first of three roadshows under the Singapore Workforce Development Agency's (WDA's) Lifelong Learning campaign kicked off yesterday at Raffles Place.

Besides making pledges to pick up a new skill, visitors to the Learning Cafe will be encouraged to try out 12 bite-sized online courses – which range from the professional “Improve efficiency with 5S” to the quirky “Are you a fashionista?”.

The WDA's message may be a simple one, but it underscores the importance for Singaporeans to embrace learning, rather than approach it with pragmatic mindset, experts told My Paper.

National University of Singapore sociologist Tan Ern Ser said that the campaign “conveys the idea the learning can be built into everyday life”.

Associate Professor Tan added that Singaporeans are serious about learning, but often for “pragmatic reasons”, and such an orientation does not encourage learning as a “lifestyle” and almost “effortless habit”.

Master trainer Michael Lum said such campaigns can “spark off” the desire to learn a new skill but ultimately individuals must cultivate the intrinsic habit.

Using the example of a pastry chef, Mr Lum noted that in today's economy, successful individuals must not only acquire a skill just once but spend between eight and 10 years learning and refining it, before they can cultivate a niche in their professions.

In Singapore's case, an attitude of learning is also important for the country's ageing population to “stay active and employable”, said Prof Tan.

Acting Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin, who visited the Learning Cafe yesterday, said individuals need to embrace lifelong learning for themselves first.

“It's a global competition out there. The countries that are most agile, or whose people are most agile, are the ones who are most adaptable... How do you keep as closely to that as possible? Lifelong learning is one platform,” said Mr Tan.

“But the basic premise is learning should not be just about the job, but for personal growth and enrichment,” he added.

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LEARNING A NEW SKILL: Coffee purveyor Ivan Kuek (left) helping Mr Tan (centre) to create coffee art at the roadshow while WDA chief executive Ng Cher Pong looks on.

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