

Project Summary for IAL Website

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Project Title:	Aligning the Polytechnic Provision of CET with SkillsFuture: Meeting Learners and Employers’ Needs
Project Number:	GA17-05
Year of Approval:	2017
Funding Source:	WDARF
Objectives and intended outcomes of the project:	The project sought to understand: (i) what constitutes effective provisions of Continuing Education and Training (CET) by engaging with graduates of programmes to make judgements about their efficacy, (ii) how employers and a larger sample of working age Singaporeans propose about the purposes for participating in and what constitutes quality of CET provisions and its teaching in meeting their needs, (iii) the professional competencies required of adult educators, and (iv) how working age Singaporeans should engage in learning-related activities to secure their employability and advance their workplaces’ viability.
Project Team	
Principal Investigator:	Professor Stephen Billett Dr Anthony Leow
Summary of Project (up to 300 words)	
<p>Working age Singaporeans need to continually engage in occupationally oriented and workplace applicable learning across their working lives to secure their employability, contribute to their workplaces’ viability, and national economic and social goals. Identifying how best to guide and support this worklife learning is a national priority as indicated by the SkillsFuture initiative. This initiative seeks to provide Singaporeans with learning opportunities to optimise their worklife potential regardless of starting points. The project aimed to understand and elaborate how this can be realised through continuing education and training (CET). The project’s findings suggest a CET ecosystem is required that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impartial advice being provided to inform working age Singaporeans about the most appropriate educational pathways and courses across the national PSEIs system before enrolment and then about their employability after completion of CET programmes. • Educational experiences being aligned to achieve employability outcomes enacted in ways appropriate for working age adults, including ease of accessibility and commensurate with adults balancing family, work, and CET commitments. • CET educators being adaptable and proficient adult educators through their pedagogic competency and currency in the occupational field in which they teach. • Establishing and sustaining productive partnerships between Singaporean workplaces and CET providers to meet the needs of working age learners and workplaces by informing the content and quality of CET provisions, including those extended into workplaces and work practices. • Working age Singaporeans needing to identify clear purposes, appraise their readiness to participate in CET, and exercise both independence and interdependence as lifelong learners. 	

Establishing and sustaining a CET ecosystem requires collaboration amongst PSEIs as CET providers to meet the needs of working age Singaporeans and workplaces. Habitually, understanding and addressing students' and employers' need is essential for the effectiveness of a national CET ecosystem premised on mature engagements with workplaces and effortful participation by working age Singaporeans.

Summary of Project Findings, Deliverables and Impacts (up to 500 words)

Singapore faces unique challenges in developing its workforce, with an aging population and rapidly evolving skill requirements across industries. This comprehensive research project examined how CET provisions can better serve working adults and employers while advancing national SkillsFuture initiatives.

The three-year study, conducted by researchers from Griffith University and Republic Polytechnic, gathered insights from multiple stakeholders through interviews with recent CET graduates and employers, surveys of working adults, and workshops with educators and administrators. Their findings reveal that effective CET requires more than quality courses—it demands an interconnected ecosystem supporting adult learners throughout their journey.

The research identified the need for an integrated "CET ecosystem" comprising five interconnected elements:

1. **Advice and guidance:** Impartial pre-course counselling and career guidance is crucial for helping adults select appropriate courses aligned with their goals and abilities. As a direct impact of this finding, Republic Polytechnic has implemented career advisory services specifically for CET students and alumni.
2. **Educational provisions:** CET courses should be accessible through flexible delivery modes, relevant to workplace needs, and taught by educators with both current industry knowledge and strong teaching skills.
3. **Engagement:** Working adults need to actively engage with course content, peers, and educators. Ideally, this engagement should extend beyond classrooms into workplaces.
4. **Support:** Adults require financial, personal, and educational support from government, employers, family, and educators to balance overlapping family, work, community and CET commitments.
5. **Workplace integration:** Employers should provide opportunities for employees to apply newly gained knowledge and skills in the workplace.

Based on these findings, the researchers offered four key recommendations:

1. Provide impartial pre- and post-course counselling to match students with appropriate courses and support employment transitions.
2. Foster collaboration among CET stakeholders (institutions, educators, employers, and learners) before, during, and after programs.
3. Enhance the professional profile of adult educators through professional development opportunities and recognition.
4. Establish quality assurance standards across the growing number of CET providers.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly shifted attitudes toward online education with follow-up research showing increased appreciation for its convenience. These findings were of particular interest to the Lifelong Learning and SkillsFuture Standing Committee, to whom the principal investigators presented their findings.

The project's impact extends beyond its formal conclusion, with findings continuing to inform policy and practice. The researchers have disseminated their work through multiple research bulletins, workshops with industry stakeholders, and academic publications i.e., journal articles, book chapters and book. Their book "*Continuing Education and Training Across the Work Lifespan: Purposes, Practices and Futures from a Singapore Study*" has been published by Springer, providing comprehensive analysis of the data and implications for practice.

By addressing these interconnected factors, Singapore can create a more effective CET system that truly empowers working adults to develop their potential throughout life while meeting the evolving needs of employers and the broader economy.