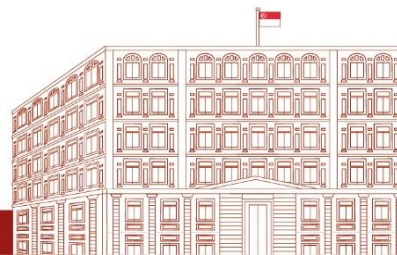


**Transcript of Opening Remarks delivered by Mr Tan Kiat How,
Senior Minister of State,
Ministry of Communications and Information,
at Accredify's Regional Education Briefing Event (6 Mar 2024)**

Quah Zheng Wei, CEO & Co-founder, Accredify
Esteemed Guests,

1. Good morning.
2. It is my pleasure to be here for Accredify's inaugural "Regional Education Briefing".
3. One key pillar of our ForwardSG agenda, which is the next phase of how Singapore will progress and is one of the key agenda of our next generation of political leaders in this new realm, is "embracing learning beyond grades," focusing on skills.
4. This includes creating more diverse pathways to develop potential, and making lifelong learning a part of our social compact.
5. Several new initiatives were also announced at Budget 2024 just last month to help our workforce reskill and upskill. For students, we will continue to offer varied pathways and customised learning experiences to support students' diverse potential. The Government has been working closely with industry and businesses in several ways on this front.
6. For example, in my ministry, we formed the TechSkills Accelerator for ITE and Polytechnic Alliance, or TIP Alliance for short. Together with IMDA, industry partners and the schools, we come together to provide opportunities for our polytechnic and ITE graduates in technology.
7. This has resulted in numerous enhanced internships, apprenticeship placements and work-study opportunities for these students.
8. Our close collaboration with industry partners like SGTech and Singapore Computer Society, as well as our Institutes of Higher Learning, ensures that our curriculum remains relevant for these students, so that they are equipped with industry-relevant skillsets, beyond just achieving good grades.
9. For individuals already in the workforce, we will continue to invest in them to allow them to re-skill and upskill. National initiatives such as the TechSkills Accelerator, or TeSA for short, have helped to upskill approximately 17,000 locals to secure rewarding tech employment opportunities. This is done in close partnership with companies, through TeSA place-and-train programmes such as company-led training.
10. A new initiative announced at Budget 2024 is the SkillsFuture Level-Up Programme, which seeks to support mid-career Singaporeans aged 40 and above in undertaking significant reskilling and upskilling to boost their prospects in their current job or pivot to a new career.
11. I must add that through these programmes, these are not just policies and schemes but the close partnership that we have with our industry partners, companies, and schools, that is precious. I've had the chance to meet many of the students in these programmes. For example, we talked about getting mid-careerists to pivot to the tech industry with various good jobs, but these jobs are not so accessible for someone who does not have enough of the necessary background experience and skills.



12. We've been running programmes and I'm very glad that the partnership between the companies hiring these potential new candidates and the training partners – whether a school, an Institute of Higher Learning, or a training provider that is under our scheme – work very closely together.

13. One important part of this is Place and Train. Many of these training providers provide an allowance while the person is going through training, and we have a number of such training providers under the TeSA scheme. The government also provides financial support and funding support for these new schemes, and I've seen very good outcomes.

14. Last year, I was at one of the programmes and I was chatting with the mid-career students, and I asked them what they used to do before joining this programme. Some of them are currently doing cybersecurity related roles, while others are in software coding and digital marketing. Their backgrounds are very diverse. One of them was a full-time professional musician but COVID-19 came, and they did not have as many gigs outdoors playing for audiences. During that period, he went for one of the Government supported schemes to learn a new skill and found out that he likes technology, and mentioned that coding is like writing music. And he is now in the tech industry.

15. In this, it gives me encouragement that these pathways are creating opportunities for a diverse group of Singaporeans of different backgrounds, even age groups, but what they have in common is the interest and the perseverance to go through the training. It's not easy to pick up new skills, especially for someone older, but I respect them, and we want to support as many of them as possible in this new social compact.

16. Government has been doing a lot and will continue to do more to support our students, Singaporeans, and workers. But employers have an important role to play.

17. Traditionally, employers have relied on academic qualifications to determine a candidate's abilities. However, this approach has its limitations. Academic qualifications do not always reflect the industry-relevancy of an individual's competencies and skillsets, given that the half-life of skills grows shorter by the day.

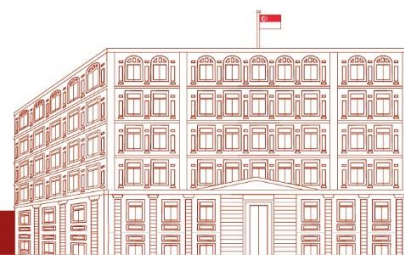
18. Many of the examples I spoke about just now don't have a degree in computing or diploma in digital technologies, but they have the skills to do the job, and they may be better at the job than someone who has a degree and diploma.

19. Further, focusing on academic qualifications limits the pool of potential talent. There are diverse means to acquire a wide range of skillsets today, including in tech, from open-source programmes to community-led initiatives, and many of the government programmes in Singapore.

20. This is why we launched the Skills-Based Hiring Handbook for Tech Roles last year, that aims to promote skills-based hiring practices among employers and job seekers. This provides a valuable resource to help companies make the move to focus on skills rather than on qualifications. Such a move benefits companies and workers alike.

21. For many employers, it is not just about HR practices, but it is also about a change in mindset and we wanted a movement to get more progressive and like-minded companies to come on board to join us, lead the way, and show that it can be done.

22. And we have many success stories. Today, we have 200 companies pledging their support to join this movement and it's very encouraging to see. Companies can tap on a wider pool of talent and find a candidate with the necessary skills for the job. Job seekers will be assessed based on their tech skills and potential, instead of being evaluated solely on one's academic qualifications.



23. A skills-based framework for talent development and attraction requires a scalable but trusted platform where certificates can be verified and trusted by parties involved. Technology has made it easier for people to fake documents, potentially exacerbated by generative AI developments. How can we use technology to reliably authenticate the qualifications and skills of individuals? You can have the programmes and intention, but you need to actually get it done.

24. I am very glad that Accredify is doing that for many partners today. Today, the use of blockchain platforms such as OpenCerts have been deployed across Institutes of Higher Learning in Singapore. These platforms allow learners to receive their certificates electronically, where the authenticity of digital certificates can be validated and trusted. This greatly reduces costs, time, and effort for the otherwise manual verification processes.

25. But I think more can be done. I therefore commend Accredify's efforts to bring together partners from different countries to seek commitment towards the harmonisation of academic and skills-based credentials, allowing individuals to showcase their skills and competencies.

26. It is important for regional stakeholders to develop and collaborate on improving qualifications and verification processes that will strengthen digital trust in the region's education and training ecosystem.

27. I am very heartened to see friends from China, India, Indonesia, and Singapore, which include government and private sector partners such as the Centre for Student Services and Development (CCSD), VFS Global, Maxy Academy, and SeeMeCV.

28. This signifies the importance that we have placed on using technology as an enabler for education, not just in transmitting knowledge through distance learning, but also to apply blockchain technology on verification of qualifications across regions.

29. By harmonising digital certificates, it omits the need to translate certificates that are issued in foreign languages. This will go a long way, and help to promote cross border talent mobility and uplift societies, to not just people coming to Singapore but for Singaporeans going abroad.

30. In closing, I thank the Accredify and the regional partners today for making the effort to empower our learners, educators and communities through education and innovation. Together, we can build a future where every individual is able to access opportunities across borders, reach his or her potential, and where knowledge becomes a catalyst for positive change.

31. Thank you.

