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Govt may use SIT as full-fledged university
By Sharon See | Posted: 22 March 2012 21:26 hrs

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SINGAPORE: The government may use the Singapore Institute of Technology as a full-fledged university as it expands university places beyond 2015.

Speaking to reporters after a closed-door townhall session, Minister of State for Education, Lawrence Wong said this is one area the Committee on University Pathways Beyond 2015 is studying.

The Education Ministry's committee on expanding the tertiary sector released its preliminary findings two weeks ago, and Thursday's townhall is one way to gather feedback on its ideas.

One pertinent question is, how to ensure the quality of education remains even as the government opens up more places to cater to greater demand and more diverse aspirations.

Participants also raised questions about instilling values and character development in university education.

Mr Wong said the expansion of NUS and NTU is limited as they are already very large, and any expansion would likely be at the Singapore University of Technology and Design, and Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT).

The government had earlier said it intends to let 30 per cent of the cohort enter publicly funded universities by 2015, up from 27 per cent currently.

"We think there's scope for SIT to move further. What does that mean, I think we'll have to study further," said Mr Wong.

"For example, would it include SIT offering its own degrees, basically SIT being transformed into a university in its own right, offering a very different kind of programme, practice-oriented, teaching university in partnership with some of its overseas partners as well. So those are ideas which we have to think about."

Even as the committee brainstorms for more pathways to universities, some forum participants, including a career counsellor and an adjunct professor, pointed out that a university degree should not be viewed as an end point. They stressed the importance of life-long learning and the need for employees to continue reinventing themselves.

"If it's just about university education alone, then this will be the bottleneck, and there will always be demands for more. So it cannot be that learning stops at a university degree," said Mr Wong.

Mr Wong said this is why the government will continue to expand its Continuing Education and Training programmes, while looking into more ways to expand part-time degree courses.

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