Diverse team to review poly and ITE education

Group’s 98 members drawn from business, industry and education

By AMELIA TENG

WITH nearly 100 figures from business, industry and education involved, a review of Singapore’s tertiary technical education system is set to be a lively affair.

Led by Senior Minister of State for Law and Education Indranee Rajah, its aim is to help keep polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) in tune with the changing economy.

When asked how it settled on a 98-strong team for the Applied Study in Polytechnics and ITE Review, or Aspire for short, the Ministry of Education (MOE) explained that the members “bring with them rich knowledge, experience and perspectives”.

“The industry representatives were selected from different sectors so that a range of industries would be represented,” added its spokesman.

The group will be divided into a 35-member steering committee, an engagement committee to reach out to parents and other stakeholders, plus three review committees which will look into different aspects. These include improving career and academic prospects of students and strengthening links with industry.

MOE announced yesterday that the steering committee will include the principals of all five local polytechnics, ITE chief executive officer Bruce Poh, Singapore Institute of Technology president Tan Thiam Soon and SIM University president Cheong Hee Kiat.

Also in the group are chief executive officer of Cathay Organisation Holdings Suhaimi Rafdi and Sakae Holdings founder and chairman Douglas Foo, who hopes to use his experience in hospitality to help bridge the gap between education and demands of industry.

“Going forward, skill sets are changing. Training and learning don’t just take place in schools, but at the workplace too,” he said. “That’s why there are so many members in the committee. We come from different backgrounds... so that we can cover a broad range of sectors.”

MOE’s permanent secretary Chan Lai Fung and its director-general of education Ho Peng are also part of the steering committee.

The Aspire committee, which will take study trips to institutions and industries in Singapore and abroad, is expected to complete its work in the second half of this year.

Said Ms Indranee: “Each individual matters, and we must ensure that our approach to technical education can help ensure that polytechnic and ITE students will continue to be well equipped for work and life, even as the operating environment evolves.

“We also want to avoid a mismatch between industry needs and student qualifications, skills and capabilities.”

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