Inspiring the next generation of power engineers

SINCE young, Fu Shiyao, 23, has always been interested in how things work. He loved assembling things on his own and liked to question why things were being done a certain way. Now in his final year of pursuing a full-time degree programme in electrical power engineering at the Singapore Institute of Technology, Fu, who comes from a family of engineers, hopes to one day join the industry, where his work can impact lives for the better.

“If not for power engineers, we wouldn’t even have the ability to make a simple phone call. Students like us wouldn’t be able to attend classes, as there would be no lights, no electricity,” he said. “These are little things we take for granted which contribute so much to our daily lives.”

Singapore needs more budding engineers like Fu. With the power sector’s growth and advent of new technologies, there is a need to groom a strong and capable talent pool to meet these challenges. Over the next decade or so, the sector will need about 2,400 new technical professionals including power engineers, according to a study conducted by the Energy Market Authority (EMA) and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency in 2011.

This is why Sembcorp is reaching out to the energy engineers of tomorrow with its new initiative. A collaboration with EMA, the Sembcorp-EMA Energy Challenge is a nationwide competition for institute of technical education, polytechnic and university students. It is aimed at engaging young people with on-site learning, a competition and internship opportunities. Winning teams will compete for internship opportunities at Sembcorp and cash prizes.

“Reaching out to young people is important in securing Singapore’s energy future. With the Sembcorp-EMA Energy Challenge, we hope to expose youths to exciting real-life challenges faced by power players and inspire the young talents who will form the next generation of Singapore’s energy leaders,” said Sembcorp Group President & CEO Mr Tang Kin Fei.

Participants in the competition will take part in sharing sessions by industry experts and plant visits. They will then get to test their practical skills by taking part in an exciting game, where they can get a taste of applying their knowledge to real-life challenges faced by power professionals.

Such hands-on learning is important to budding engineers like Fu and his schoolmates, who have embarked on projects in school such as designing, building and operating an electric buggy from scratch as well as simulating a power distribution network. Taking part in the Sembcorp-EMA Energy Challenge will complement what they learn in school, and show them what the life of a power engineer is like.

The prospect of internships for the winning team also offers opportunities for “great exposure” as they allow students to mingle and interact with power engineers and sector leaders, said Fu. “It would be exciting to work with veterans, learn how technology has evolved over time and how we can further innovate for greater energy efficiency.”