

**REMARKS BY MR ONG YE KUNG, MINISTER FOR
EDUCATION (HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS), AT THE
WORK-LEARN TECHNICAL DIPLOMA SIGNING
CEREMONY, AT ITE COLLEGE WEST, MONDAY 13
NOVEMBER 2017**

1. Good morning. For the longest time, we have been receiving many suggestions to have a dual system of education like Switzerland or Germany. A dual system means there is an academic track and a vocational track. In Switzerland, up to 80 per cent of their people take the vocational path and the remaining 20 per cent take the academic route.

2. When we first announced the Work-Learn Technical Diploma (WLTD) at the Committee of Supply debate earlier this year, the reaction was different. The reaction was, "What is new?". The Institute of Technical Education (ITE) students can already go on to Polytechnics or private education institutions to get their diplomas. Therefore, there are two different responses. On one hand, people suggested to have a dual system of education. On the other hand, people asked what is new about this ITE WLTD.

3. In essence, we are creating a dual system. We have a vocational, apprenticeship system for ITE students with this diploma. There are two distinctive differences between this ITE diploma and the Polytechnic diplomas. First, the admissions system for the technical diploma is fundamentally different. In order for ITE students to apply to Polytechnics, they have to meet the GPA requirements or participate in the Early Admissions Exercise (EAE). For this technical diploma, the admission criteria are decided by the employers. If the students have a *Nitec* GPA of 2.0, they can be considered for admission. The admissions system is

determined by the employers, similar to other vocational systems in Germany and Switzerland.

4. Second, this is an apprenticeship model. It is different from going to institutions to attend lectures and do project work. The students in this apprenticeship programme will learn as much from the employers as they do from their ITE lecturers. The employers have a big role to play in co-crafting the curriculum.

5. I encourage more employers to come on board the WLTD. I also encourage employers to train beyond their own needs. Companies in Germany and Switzerland set up training centres to take in trainees and train them for the whole industry. One such example is Swatch. They train for the whole industry, including their competitors. This is the culture of the Swiss and German apprenticeship systems.

6. Today, we are taking the first – and important – step. I hope we will continue to develop and grow this dual system of education. In so doing, we can expand the diverse pathways for our young people. There is a path available for every student, regardless of their talents and interests.

7. Thank you.