

BACKGROUND

DIRECTIONAL EMPHASIS OF SECTOR

Manpower development is a priority in Singapore given the country's pursuit of industrial growth. The government recognizes the need to invest in human resources and skill development in order to meet demand by industries establishing operations in Singapore.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is the official body responsible for the formulation and implementation of educational policies. MOE also controls the establishment and administration of government and government-aided primary and secondary schools, junior colleges, as well as private schools.

Similarly, although the National University of Singapore (NUS), the Polytechnic Institutes (eg : Ngee Ann and Singapore Polytechnic) and the Vocational and Industrial Training Board (VITB) are statutory boards responsible to their own governing boards, they are still under the overall policy direction of MOE.

Training centers and institutes for skill enhancement and the development of technical know how are run by the Economic Development Board (EDB).

In 1979, the government formed a council for professional and technical education (CPTE) chaired by the Minister of Trade and Industry to look into the future skilled manpower requirements. The development plan focused on three main areas :

- Providing maximum education and training opportunities to the young before they join the workforce by increasing enrollment in various institutions, including universities and polytechnics and by expanding post graduate programs in the areas of engineering, information technology and business administration.
- Upgrading skills of individuals already in the workforce through VITB programs like Basic Education Skills Training (BEST), Modular Skills Training (MOST), and Worker Improvement Through Secondary Education (WISE).
- Ensuring that the workforce possesses more flexible and creative skills by re-orienting the educational system to be more broad based, raising the level of creativity and stressing the need for continuous training.

The EDB recognizes the importance of this sector and therefore is encouraging private sector participation. Several training centers (eg : Philips Government Training Center, the German-Singapore Institute and the Japan-Singapore Institute) have been established with the cooperation of private firms and foreign governments.

ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

The general education system in Singapore is based on 6-8 years of primary education, 4-5 years secondary education, 2 years of pre-university and 3-4 years university. In addition, there are several vocational or training institutes (1-2 years) or continuing education and training programs.