

Publication: The Straits Times, Breaking News

Date: 13 November 2015

Headline: New study by SMU will aim to help Asean address skills gap

## New study by SMU will aim to help Asean address skills gap



Academics hope to help member states plug their skills gaps sooner by surfacing information of skills in industries across the region. ST PHOTO: DANIEL NEO

PUBLISHED NOV 13, 2015, 3:54 PM SGT

Marissa Lee

SINGAPORE - While the Asean Economic Community moves slowly towards its 10-nation target of freer labour mobility, some academics hope to help member states plug their skills gaps sooner by surfacing more information on the demand and availability of skills in key growth industries across the region.

"A lot of studies have been done at a very macro level using aggregated data, but it doesn't give us much information on what actionable government measures can be taken. By focusing on a few key industries that will be important, we'll look at the projection of demand and the projection of supply," said Dr Tan Kim Song, associate professor of economics at Singapore Management University, who is part of the study team.

The SMU team, led by Professor James Tang, dean of the school of social sciences, is working with companies, government bodies and other research institutions to understand the mismatch

Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Permission required for reproduction.

**Publication: The Straits Times, Breaking News**

**Date: 13 November 2015**

**Headline: New study by SMU will aim to help Asean address skills gap**

between the supply and demand for skills across five Asean countries - Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Singapore.

"We want to shed light on the role of government in facilitating training and education," said Dr Tan at the Workforce Readiness in Asean symposium organised by JPMorgan and the Asia Society at the Fullerton Hotel on Friday .

"If you look at Asean countries, not enough coordination and standard-setting has been done so there is confusion about what is the right kind of training, and that contributes to the skills gap.

The study, commissioned by JPMorgan, will share its findings around June next year.

The problem of an "entrepreneurial skills gap" in Asean was also raised by speakers during the symposium.

But JPMorgan Singapore's senior country officer Edmund Lee rejected concerns that the problem was a big one for Singapore.

"Perhaps (Singapore's) educational system doesn't develop idea generation, but is driving rote learning and working. People have been talking about this for the last 50 years, so that's nothing new but it's something that we've identified that needs some effort to be put in," he said on the sidelines of the event.

"The classical model of building a workforce and getting people to work is something that will have to continue, but at the same time you have to layer this with some entrepreneurial ideas, some innovation."