



Panelists at the ST Education Forum 2017 were (from left) ST senior education correspondent Sandra Davie, SMU president Arnoud De Meyer, SMU's board of trustees chairman Ho Kwon Ping, Ms Nandini Jayaram, the South-east Asia human resource lead for Google Asia-Pacific, and the moderator, ST managing editor Fiona Chan. About 500 people attended the forum, which focused on the future of work, universities and the economy. PHOTOS: BLOOMBERG, ST FILE

# 5 VIEWS ON FUTURE JOBS

BY ANG YIYING

**S**ome 500 participants, comprising mostly students, learnt how to surf the waves of change in a world of disruption at The Straits Times Education Forum 2017 on March 25.

The panel of professionals who shared their advice on the future of work, universities and the economy comprised Ms Sandra Davie, ST senior education correspondent; Professor Arnoud De Meyer, president of Singapore Management University; Mr Ho Kwon Ping, chairman of the board of trustees of SMU; and Ms Nandini Jayaram, HR lead, South East Asia, Google Asia Pacific.

IN rounds up the key points from the forum, which is into its fourth year.

## 1 STAY FLEXIBLE

Prof De Meyer, referring to his own career path, noted that people should be open to changes in what they want in their careers.

He said that he had often been asked by SMU students if he had planned on heading a university here, and he would tell them: "I didn't. I planned to build transformers and electrical motors... I never wanted to go into academia."

He added that he was now "very happy" where he was, though it was "totally different from what I originally planned".

He said: "You have to be open minded. You

have to see what your opportunities are. You have to adjust yourself... The biggest risk is that you assume that the path you dream of today is the one that you pursue at all cost.

"I would say, go for flexibility, go for continuous learning, go for continuous adaptation."

## 2 IDENTIFY YOUR UNIQUE STRENGTHS

Ms Nandini said that as people have to keep learning, they should ask themselves if they enjoy what they are doing.

This also means not jumping on trends and bandwagons when choosing a career.

She said people should consider their attributes: "Is that something that differentiates you? Is that something you are good at and strong at? Is that something that will build your strength?"

## 3 BE CURIOUS

Mr Ho said that while social skills and domain knowledge will make someone competent, truly successful people have an innate curiosity that sets them apart. "Curiosity is the source of innovation and creativity," he said.

In fact, he said that when interviewing people for positions, he looks for this particular trait.

## 4. THERE'S STILL A DEMAND FOR THE HUMAN TOUCH

A study showed that when participants were asked to do a blind taste test of coffee made

by a barista and coffee made by a robot, 90 per cent of testers picked the barista-made coffee as being the better one.

Citing the example, Mr Ho pointed out that just because jobs could be automated did not mean that they would all be replaced. Jobs such as babysitters or personal trainers would still survive.

Ms Davie later weighed in with her advice for students: "You should be thinking about skills that will not be replaced."

## 5 MIX SKILLS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

The various panellists spoke about the growing interdisciplinary nature of higher education.

Said Mr Ho: "Increasingly, undergraduates will be able to create their own combination of courses to fit their own aspirations. The intersection of disciplines will be where new jobs will be created."

He gave the example of biology and engineering to form bio-mechanics in his time as a student, and the now-emerging field of bio-robotics.

Ms Nandini pointed out that viewing the world as a connected system of moving parts and figuring out how various parts, such as an industry, economy or socio-political landscape, come together will give people context and vision for solving problems.

She added: "I am hoping all of us can be problem solvers and there is no shortage of demand for people who can solve problems."



## ARE ROBOTS GOING TO STEAL YOUR JOB?

These are a sample of jobs and their likelihood of being automated.

## LIKELIHOOD OF JOBS BEING AUTOMATED

- Telephone salesperson (left): 99.0 per cent
- Accountant: 95.3 per cent
- Cook: 73.4 per cent
- Chef: 36.6 per cent

- Web designer: 20.6 per cent
- Architect: 2 per cent
- Nurse: 1 per cent
- Teacher: 0.8 per cent
- Psychologist: 0.7 per cent
- Speech therapist: 0.5 per cent

This sample of jobs and their automation risk is based on a list compiled by the BBC, based on a study by Oxford University and Deloitte.

To see a fuller list of jobs, go to: <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-34066941>.