

# Energy Sector Mulls Possibility Of WSQ



By  
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The wafer fabrication sector's specially-tailored Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications system launched on 31 August 2009 has inspired the energy sector to explore the idea of having an Energy Utilities WSQ as well.

With a technical steering committee already in place, Union of Power and Gas Employees, supported by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute), organised a presentation of the WSQ framework on 30 November 2009 to management partners.

If the Energy Utilities WSQ goes ahead as planned, it will potentially empower more than 3,000 workers with quality training and nationally-recognised skills certification.

UPAGE General Secretary Nachiappan RK Sinniah said that the Energy Utilities WSQ should be able to provide 'cheaper' training for companies as there is high level of government funding for WSQ programmes; 'better' industry-wide training collaboration for existing workers, potential workers and companies in the power and gas sector; and 'faster' progression in developing skills for workers as a WSQ framework will provide clear and structured pathways for progression.

The presentation also gave management partners the chance to engage in a dialogue session with NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say to discuss the Energy Utilities WSQ, as well as the issues of re-employment of older workers and PMETs (Professionals, Managers, Executives, and Technical People) breakthrough. SG Lim was instrumental in getting the idea for the Energy Utilities WSQ off the ground.

## Energy Utilities WSQ Discussion Highlights

To create sustainable growth and competitiveness for Singapore, NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say stressed that it was necessary for all types of companies in all sectors of the economy to work together to help all Collars, all Ages, and all Nationalities of workers to achieve a quantum leap in productivity. He said that the recent announcement by the government to curb the inflow of foreign workers in order to reduce dependence on them for economic growth served as a timely wake-up call for all sectors to re-focus on improving productivity. SG Lim added that all sectors, including energy, should look into up-skilling, re-skilling and multi-skilling their workers so as to make better use of every person, and the Energy Utilities WSQ is a good start as "it will become the measurement of skills and competency in the industry in time to come." SG Lim also revealed that Singaporeans' main grouse with the energy industry is that power charges are too high and suggested they look into managing cost effectiveness, something that a more productive workforce trained under the Energy Utilities WSQ framework may be able to address.

### Supporting The Push For Energy Utilities WSQ

**"In the energy industry, there is a culture of working together. The concern is that the younger generation of workers have a different set of language, culture and concept of working together especially when there are emergencies and security situations. To continue this very familiar and strong working understanding, we need to continue to develop opportunities for training and development so that the younger workers have that same mindset, as well as understanding of the industry's needs. There will also be new areas to think about, such as smart grid, smart metering, electric vehicles, and convergence of the power grid with IT. We care about developing new skill sets for the workers, hence it is a good idea for us to formally develop a competency map that tackles all these areas."**

Lawrence Wong, Energy Market Authority Chief Executive Officer



## Re-employment Of Older Workers Discussion Highlights

NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say was heartened by the fact that there is 100 per cent support for re-employment of older workers in the energy sector. He congratulated the Singapore Power Group for achieving Level 4 status, the highest level on the NTUC re-employment framework, as well as Sembcorp Utilities Private Limited for achieving Level 3. SG Lim also took the opportunity to encourage all management partners to work towards reaching Level 4.

**"At the Singapore Power Group, we have an 'opt-out' approach. That is, older workers are automatically re-employed unless they choose not to continue when they reach 62. About 85 per cent of our older workers are re-employed for the first two years, and sometimes employment is extended up to the age of 66, depending on a case-by-case basis."**

Quek Poh Huat, Singapore Power Group Chief Executive Officer

## PMETs Breakthrough Discussion Highlights

NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say pointed out that many PMETs were neglected during the downturn as the focus was on rank-and-file workers. Moving forward, he said that tripartite parties will be looking into strengthening the support framework for PMETs because they will form a significant part of the workforce profile in the future, and therefore become essential to the continuity of strong tripartism in Singapore. For a start, PMETs will be provided with a minimum level of protection and their needs in the areas of work (workplace representation), live (professional development) and play (social benefits and well-being) will also be attended to.

### Re-employment Training For Mature Workers?

**"For PMETs representation to be successful, we must also be involved in engaging the ageing workforce and re-employment for PMETs. Emphasis should be given to the workers aged in their 50s till 62. How can they be trained and prepared for re-employment? Maybe we can tailor something for this group. In their current job, they may want someone better to take over so that it ensures continuity with attention and experience."**

Quek Poh Huat, Singapore Power Group Chief Executive Officer

**"This is an important point; we must try to make our workers as employable as possible. Then, hopefully, there will be more employable workers at the age of 62. In the worst case scenario, those under the Employment Assistance Plan are already more employable and can move on to other sectors."**

Lim Swee Say, NTUC Secretary-General

**"In that regard, there is a need to have flexibility in terms of core modules for the Energy Utilities WSQ because right now it seems industry specific. It should take a horizontal approach so workers can move into other industries as well."**

Lawrence Wong, Energy Market Authority Chief Executive Officer