



ST PHOTO: RAJ NADARAJAN

Mr Tan (seated, in second row) listening in on a group discussion at the Manpower Ministry's first Our Singapore Conversation dialogue yesterday.

'Seize opportunities for lifelong learning'

Janice Heng

The individual took centre stage at a Manpower Ministry dialogue yesterday on lifelong learning, with participants stressing that a worker has to personally take charge of his own training journey.

Also, training should be seen in the broader context of personal development, not just for practical gain, they added.

The focus on the individual was also highlighted by Acting Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin at his ministry's first Our Singapore Conversation dialogue.

The Government will provide opportunities, but individuals must seize them, he said in his closing remarks.

"You take charge of your own life, you see what you can do, we have all the resources available and we see what we can do," he said.

Continuing education and training is particularly suited to this, as it comes in the form of specific modules, he told about 40 participants at the three-hour session.

The dialogue is the first of four which the ministry is holding this month. Another will be on the same theme, while two others will be about giving Singaporeans a fair go at jobs.

Those keen on taking part can sign up on the ministry's website.

Many at yesterday's session felt training was not just about practical concerns like job success, but also about personal development.

As IT trainer Muthu Krishnan, 54, puts it: "It's about having a fulfilling life."

The focus on the individual was evident in a proposal, made several times in the past, for individual training accounts funded either by the Government or Central Provident Fund savings.

It would promote "individual accountability" for training, said 60-year-old former unionist Ramli Puteh.

But employers too have to be keen to train workers, said many participants. Some said bosses did not want to send them for training, nor give them time off to attend courses they do on their own.

As for the Government, it could do more to bring the many courses and funding sources to the attention of workers, they added.

But, Mr Tan added, it can also play a role in quality control if workers and bosses step up and give feedback: "Whatever courses we provide must be effective. If there are courses that don't make sense... tell us and we will change."