



**Opening Ceremony of
the ITE-VTC International Student Seminar 2013
ITE College Central
24 June 2013**

**Mrs Carrie YAU, GBS, JP
Executive Director of VTC**

Chairman Tan (ITE Chairman), Chairman Chen (VTC Chairman), Deputy Chairman Heng (ITE Deputy Chairman), Director Poh (ITE Director), ITE and VTC Colleagues, Students, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be here today attending the opening ceremony of the ITE-VTC International Student Seminar 2013, which will explore ways our young people can contribute to the community as we seek to build an inclusive and caring society. This is the first time I have attended this biennial event as Executive Director of Hong Kong's VTC. I am most honoured to witness the growing importance that both our governments have attached to this seminar and the opportunities it provides for our students to exchange ideas and experiences.

Since 2007, the Seminar Programme, jointly organised by ITE and VTC, has been held alternately in Singapore and Hong Kong. It is a great privilege for our students to have such an innovative interactive platform to reflect and deliberate on current social issues and strengthen their commitment towards shaping a better society. This year's theme, "Youth in Service, Inspiring Community", is especially important as it addresses issues that will be impossible to avoid in years to come.

As two of the region's most prominent global cities, Singapore and Hong Kong have important similarities. We each have a highly educated workforce, metropolitan outlook and impressive economic

accomplishments. Though I hate to add that both Singapore and Hong Kong have one more similarity in having to bear the pollution caused by our neighbours. Your haze may be denser but our haze comes more often. This only serves to remind us that life is full of challenges.

Inevitably, as our societies and economies have continued to develop, we have found ourselves confronted with fresh challenges including a greying population, a growing divide between haves and have-nots and the necessity to provide for those with special educational needs. I believe we can share our insights and learn from each other's experience to find solutions to these issues in ways that bring out the best in young people and help them to build a firm foundation for future generations.

Government support is important in this mission, but to build a more caring and inclusive society, organisations and individuals alike should join hands to deliver on our social obligations.

At VTC, we have embraced this idea across several fronts. Earlier this year we set up a special office to review Hong Kong's ageing population trends and how our services and products could be realigned to provide viable solutions for the challenges at hand. We are also offering enriched vocational education and training programmes and services to cater for those with special educational needs, helping them to enhance their employment prospects and further education opportunities. And VTC students with financial hardship are offered the assistance they need to continue pursuing their studies with us.

Over the past six years, this ITE-VTC Seminar Programme has promoted active citizenship among students from both cities, equipping them with the soft skills they will find useful later in life. My message to our young students is this - in a year or two, many of you will enter the work arena where you will find that apart from solid technical know-how, employers prefer to recruit motivated candidates capable of critical, cross-disciplinary thinking, who possess the necessary communication and interpersonal skills. These qualities are often best acquired when interacting with others. I hope all of you will take the opportunity to learn and hone such skills through this Seminar.

As you meet each other face to face, I encourage you to take the opportunity to understand each other better, as individuals. This Seminar Programme is a fine opportunity for you to develop friendships and networks that will last beyond these few days in the expectation that someday soon you might meet each other again in the global work space.

Just last night, I had a nice dinner at my Singaporean friend's home. Our friendship started in the summer of 1975 when we took part in the Student Exchange Programme at Sophia University, Tokyo. Therefore I can speak with conviction to our students here. I truly believe the friendship gained today will bring you many happy returns in the years to come.

Finally, I would like to thank our great partner in the region, the ITE led by Chairman Tan and Director Poh and their colleagues, for hosting this event and I wish all our students a fruitful and enjoyable learning experience.

Thank you.