Calibre of ITE graduates rising

More entering poly and varsity is next if they do well

By Leow Si Wan & Jennani Durai

MR BRENDA N Lee, 21, is in a good place. His near-perfect grade point average (GPA) of 3.98 made him one of Temasek Polytechnic’s top graduates this year and bagged him a place in Nanyang Technological University’s engineering course.

But his route to university was anything but conventional. His school years were less than scintillating: He was in the EM3 and Normal (Technical) streams and was then posted to the Institute of Technical Education (ITE).

But he is among a significant number of ITE graduates who, after a polytechnic stint, are making it to a local university.

Ministry of Education figures indicate that the proportion of ITE students who make it to the polytechnics went up from 12 per cent in 1995 to 19 per cent this year, out of the 11,000 to 12,000 who graduate from the ITE each year.

This year, more than 2,000 ITE students won polytechnic places. If they fare well there, a local university is their next stop.

Each year, over the last three years, the local universities have made 150 offers of admission to polytechnic graduates formerly from the ITE.

Singapore Polytechnic (SP) principal Tan Hang Cheong confirmed that the calibre of ITE students is on the up; many join SP with good aggregates, some have a perfect 4.0 GPA, he said.

Indeed, Mr Lee is not alone.

ITE graduate Hu Zheng Bin, 26, one of Nanyang Polytechnic’s top graduates this year, is waiting to enter Singapore Management University to read information systems management.

A common refrain among students like them is that they need to slog harder than their peers.

Mr Lee Chee Hoe, 24, who went from the ITE to SP and is now studying engineering at Nanyang Technological University, said his current classmates think he is joking when he tells them he was from the ITE, “because they don’t think ITE students can eventually go to university”.

He said: “The lecturers at the ITE and the polys are very willing to help students who put in the work. If you really want it and aim high enough, you’ll make it eventually, even if you’re in the ITE.”

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