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## **Record number of animation courses being run by tertiary institutes**

By Pearl Forss, Channel NewsAsia

SINGAPORE : Singapore's polytechnics are moving into animation in a big way.

Three more polytechnics are offering the course this year to meet increased demand from both students and industry.

Singapore has attracted world class animation outfits like Lucasfilm and Koei Animations, and hopes to attract more.

Four years ago, one three-man team at Peach Blossom Media was working out of an attic in a shophouse.

Today, they keep thousands of artists in India and China employed.

One cartoon, Bruise Black, about a gongfu fighting rabbit facing off evil robots, was chosen by Walt Disney USA to make into a pilot.

Another production - Wild Animal Babies - will air in the US this October.

Lingun Sung, Director, Peach Blossom Media, said, "Animation, I think, should only be a passion; it should not be a business, just because the risks are so great, for example product development time takes so long. There are a lot of new companies sprouting out. Some are going to blindly fall off a cliff, a lot of them will, but all we need is some of them to reach the finish line and create some really good Singapore animation."

The Media Development Authority has invested S\$165 million in the animation industry in the last two years.

It has expanded by more than 10 times in the last four years, but experts also warn that turnover is extremely high, because animators here are not as creative as those overseas.

Graham Michael Perkins, Consultant, School of Technology for the Arts, Republic Polytechnic, said, "The industry is requiring the thinking type of student....not technologically savvy...there is more to it than knowing the features of a software, some people leave poly and universities competent in those areas but industries need more than that."

Local institutes are encouraging students to take up art, explore and experiment to solve this problem.

Republic Polytechnic has opened the School of Technology for the Arts, while Temasek Polytechnic is launching a new diploma in moving images.

Irwanta Salim, Course Manager, Interactive Media Design, Temasek Polytechnic, said, "We have ideation subjects, how to generate lots and lots of ideas, and translating that into a design process. We have a lot of art-based subjects, where students are encouraged to explore, experiment, say with paintings, print and also pottery."

In May, Nanyang Polytechnic will offer a new course which focuses on computerised animation techniques; while in July, the Nanyang Technological University will welcome over 100 students in its new school for Art, Design and Media.

But is the local market ready to absorb the big supply of animators when they graduate three or four years down the road?

Educators say students must be prepared to look outside of Singapore for jobs with the global market worth US\$70 billion.

Associate Professor Russell Pensyl, Vice-Dean, School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University, said, "If you look at the opening up of the marketplace in China, at the opening of media markets around Southeast Asia, the potential is quite great." - CNA

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