

Forum Letter Reply to the Straits Times: Train pre-school teachers better

A Collaborative Approach to Supporting Early Childhood Educators

Early childhood educators are passionate about nurturing young children under their care, and often go the extra mile to ensure that their needs are met, working hand in hand with many stakeholders. Hence, the editorial “Train pre-school teachers better” (27 Sept) is right to highlight the daily stresses and challenges faced by early childhood educators, and that support should be available in such a high-pressure work environment.

Our training at the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC) makes clear the educators’ duty and obligation to ensure child safety, and equips them with the professional knowledge and skills, including a range of classroom management and parent engagement strategies, to effectively nurture young children.

Equally important is enabling our students to understand the stresses on the job, learn self-awareness and acquire the coping strategies for self-regulation when faced with difficult situations. In our training, students delve into real-life workplace scenarios where they gain practical skills in handling challenging situations through role-play and discussion. NIEC also organises webinars where in-service educators can learn practical tips to enhance their well-being and practice, knowing that they can connect, support and learn from each other as part of the EC fraternity.

Nevertheless, training and translation into good practice must be accompanied with support at the EC workplace to enable educators to make appropriate behaviour management and child guidance decisions, and also the measures to take when they feel overwhelmed, for example, in seeking assistance from colleagues. Centre leaders have a key role to play in fostering a culture of care and support for their educators, which includes making provisions for their self-care and in establishing trusting partnership with parents to support their work.

We know that happy teachers will lead to happy children. Hence, a multi-prong approach, particularly in promoting and sustaining a conducive workplace environment by developing staff camaraderie and putting in place supporting structures, for example, enabling educators to reach out to support networks in times of need, will be critical in enabling them to give their best to children and families.

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