



A Breakthrough In PMETs Breakthrough

LM Launches Professional Chapter For Early Childhood Educators To Capture Sector's Phenomenal Increase In Workforce Numbers

You could call the early childhood education sector the new poster child for PMETs (Professionals, Managers, Executives, and Technical People) breakthrough.

As Singapore strives to up its fertility rate, the sector will see a boost of 200 childcare centres in the next four years which will welcome a whopping 2,400 early childhood professionals into the fold, taking the total to over 11,300.

Besides wanting to tap on the phenomenal growth of workforce numbers, the Labour Movement also considered the sector's youthful energy when it launched the professional chapter for early childhood educators on 2 December 2009, the first of its series to extend PMETs outreach.

Said NTUC Assistant Secretary-General Ong Ye Kung: "We chose this sector as the pilot because the parties involved worked the fastest, have more ideas, and it is a growing and changing sector."

Supported by NTUC, NTUC's SEED Institute and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute), the ECE Professional Chapter will be spearheaded by the Education Services Union to provide a holistic suite of services to greatly enrich the lives of early childhood educators, with professional development taking the frontline.

ASG Ong elaborated: "First, we will try to bring more PMETs into the sector. Companies under ESU will offer the vacancies, SEED Institute will provide the professional training, and e2i will do the outreach to PMETs, and play the role of the matchmaker, pulling candidates, vacancies and training provider together. Through this approach, NTUC has helped bring in 350 early childhood educators into the sector this year.

"Second, upgrade the expertise of current early childhood educators. We need to deepen their capabilities and the idea is not to move them to Masters or Doctorate degrees but to support them to undergo



(Top from left) ESU Executive Secretary Zainudin Nordin, NTUC's SEED Institute Director Chan Tee Seng, ESU President Michael Tan, NTUC ASG Ong Ye Kung celebrate a new chapter with early childhood educators and ESU members.

programmes that are skills-based, practical, and help them do their job better. It may, in fact, be pitched at Certificate or Advance Certificate level.

"Third, help workers meet new industry requirements. The government has stipulated that with effect from January 2013, at least 75 per cent of all preschool teachers in a particular centre must obtain a GCE 'O' Level credit in English Language, and possess a Diploma in Pre-school Teaching."

The third initiative was, by far, the most well-received by the nearly 300 early childhood educators in attendance who applauded with great aplomb the news that the ECE Professional Chapter will "reach out to those without DPE-T and help them enrol into the programme."

And instead of going with the impracticality of getting current early childhood educators to re-take their GCE 'O' Level English examinations, e2i and ESU will introduce a programme to put them through a Computer Adaptive Test for English proficiency, a standard widely recognised by the industry.

ASG Ong assured that more help will be rendered to those who still have problems making the mark.

"We will put them through the relevant Employability Skills System programme to upgrade their English proficiency level. We hope that by the middle of next year, the Government will adopt ESS as an alternative to meeting the GCE 'O' Level English requirement. This will open up a more accessible and practical avenue for existing early childhood educators to upgrade their English proficiency."



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