



Lead principal Madam Tan Wee Him believes her role in early childhood education can make a difference in young lives. PHOTO: TED CHEN

From building ships to planning learning journeys

Former shipbuilding engineer Tan Wee Him has gone from drawing up system diagrams to early childhood curriculum as a pre-school principal

BY AUGUST CARLOS

Madam Tan Wee Him worked in shipbuilding engineering for seven years before deciding to steer her career path in a different direction.

“It had always been my dream to be a kindergarten teacher, but I didn’t have the know-how or the required skills,” the 47-year-old says.

When she heard about Ngee Ann Polytechnic’s Specialist Diploma in Early Childhood through the polytechnic’s website, she pursued it, and became an assistant teacher in 1999.

Madam Tan says: “I thoroughly enjoyed working with young children, and loved to interact with them daily.”

After completing her part-time Bachelor of Early Childhood Studies degree at Monash University in

2007, she joined PCF Sparkletots, one of the largest pre-school operators in Singapore. Her new position provided opportunities to attend professional courses and upskill.

Opening the door to career opportunities

Today, Madam Tan is the lead centre principal at PCF Sparkletots @ Choa Chu Kang Block 10. Her responsibilities include supporting quality instruction for the holistic development of the children and building the professional capacity of her staff.

She joined the organisation as centre principal in 2011 and underwent professional development through PCF’s career advancement initiatives such as the Overseas Learning Experience Programme, leadership programmes, and external training courses offered by the Ministry of Social and Family Development’s Early Childhood Development Agency.

Madam Tan is glad for the opportunity to play a key role in the future of today’s children.

“Early childhood education is critical as a foundation for lifelong learning and well-being as children’s young minds, attitudes and behaviours are shaped through their learning experiences.

“My career journey with PCF Sparkletots has been fulfilling and satisfying as I get to work with individuals who are also passionate and committed to nurturing young children,” she says.

A rewarding career in nurturing young minds

The early childhood sector’s skills framework ensures that pre-school teachers have a clear path to career advancement

BY JOLENE LIMUCO

As the number of dual-income families and working grandparents continues to rise, pre-school enrolment levels also look set to rise.

According to the Jobs Situation Report published by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) last November, this statistic is driving labour demand in the early childhood (EC) sector. The ministry added that there has been a 30 per cent increase in jobs in the sector since 2016, and demand is expected to grow as pre-school places are set to rise to more than 200,000 in 2023.

To attract and retain talent in the sector, the Early Childhood Development Agency, SkillsFuture Singapore and Workforce Singapore established in 2016 three main career tracks under a skills framework to ensure that pre-school teachers have a clear path to career advancement.

The framework aims to provide guidelines on the salary range and career progression of educators, educarers and leaders.

Ms Pauline Lao, lead principal of M.Y World @ Anchorvale Parkview believes the skills framework creates a secure and promising career for all educators in the fraternity because it “provides a systematic progression... for staff to deepen their professional growth as they leverage innovation”.

Opportunities for mid-career professionals

The EC sector is also offering positions to professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs) who may be interested in becoming teachers, centre leaders and childcare services managers.

In the fourth quarter of last year, there were 1,900 jobs offered in the sector. Of these, 1,620 positions were for PMETs. The remaining 290 jobs were for non-PMET roles.

Madam Tan Wee Him, a lead centre principal at PCF Sparkletots @ Choa Chu Kang Block 10, made the switch to the EC sector after working for seven years as a shipbuilding engineer. She embarked on a new career path as an assistant teacher after completing a Specialist Diploma in Early Childhood at Ngee Ann Polytechnic (see story on the left).

Madam Tan is one of many PMETs who have joined the EC sector mid-career. According to MOM, about three out of four people working in the EC sector have come from other sectors.

Looking for a mid-career switch like Madam Tan, and keen on learning more about being an EC educator? Find out how the professional development conversion programme for pre-school teachers and place-and-train programmes for educarers can help you chart your course. Visit <https://www.ecda.gov.sg/shapeourtomorrow> for information.

Definition and salary range for educarer, teacher and leader tracks

Track	Definition	Salary Range
Educarer	Educators on this track will work with children aged 2 months to 4 years in both kindergartens and childcare centres.	\$1,800-\$3,150
Teacher	Educators on this track will work with children aged 4 to 6 years in both kindergartens and childcare centres.	\$2,200-\$3,550
Leader	Educators on this track will take on centre or teacher leadership positions in both kindergartens and childcare centres.	\$3,150-\$7,600