



# EARLY EDUCATORS

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Dear Fellow Professionals,

Compliments of the season! This year has been an exciting and enriching one for all of us here in Singapore. We have had two meetings held here in our home town; one where Global Leaders for Asia and the Pacific (GLAP) met to dialogue on leadership and advocacy, and the other was a meeting of researchers at the Pacific Early Childhood Education Research Association (PECERA) Conference. How have we benefitted from it? The meeting of the global leaders painted for us possibilities of how we can act as change agents to transform practices which sustain development, learning and wellbeing for children and their families. The PECERA Conference availed to us the current research as we explore the dynamics between research and practice. In the same way, our AECES Journal, the Early Educators is a unique journal in that it contains articles that blend research and practice. It reports on the practitioners' learning journeys in putting research into practice and acting as change agents.

In addition to GLAP and PECERA, a group of leader-practitioners ventured out to attend the Korean Society Early Childhood Education (KSECE) Conference cum school visits in Seoul, Korea. Inspired by their experience, a few ECE leader-practitioners shared their plans in acting as change agents by introducing creative and innovative changes in enhancing the programmes in their pre-schools. Meanwhile, a group of leaders in their inspirational article "Yours and Ours in Leadership at the PAP Community Foundation (PCF) Pre-schools" unveils the power of "participative" and "servant" leadership, where significant changes were made to the teaching of the Chinese language.

It appears that the resounding theme so far is on leadership and change. However, the background work in bringing about the learning and leadership development opportunities were brought about by building long-term relationships among organisations. AECES has been working collaboratively with GLAP, PECERA and KSECE for years. Another organisation is the Association for Childhood International (ACEI) which has launched the Decade for Childhood and published "Ten Pillars of a Good Childhood". Please read more about the Decade for Childhood and together with the ten pillars, a good framework has been crafted to help us implement more changes for the well-being of our children and their families. However, is change only in the hands of organisations and leader-practitioners?

In the final article, we have a learning story of a child who has been in the FLAiR Programme initiated by the Ministry of Education. The learning story was written by a ProFLAiR, the early literacy teacher, who completed the development programme for ProFLAiRs. Since 2006, AECES has been conducting the professional development programme for over 200 ProFLAiRs who are serving over 2,000 children all over the nation. The ProFLAiR, Amy Phang, together with other ProFLAiRs, are making positive changes in the development of the children in their care. As such, they are ECE leaders too. As long as we have influence over another's life, we are all leaders in our own right. For AECES to serve ECE teachers and leaders better, I encourage you to complete, if you have not completed it electronically, the enclosed survey forms.

Finally, I would like to wish each and every one of you another exciting and enriching year ahead and may the leader in you make a sustainable difference in the lives of our children and their families.



Christine Chen  
President and Founder

**Leadership and Advocacy for ECCD Seminar:  
Global Leaders for Asia and the Pacific (GLAP)  
14 - 15 September 2012  
Article by Seminar Participant**

## **Insights I Acquired from the Leadership and Advocacy Seminar**

Sherilyn Sia  
Member of AECES

AECES sponsored 20 members to participate in the Leadership and Advocacy Seminar for Early Childhood Care and Education: Global Leaders for Asia and Pacific, 14-15 September 2012, at the Asian International College. I was very lucky indeed to be one of the participants in the scholarly seminar and I thank AECES for continually living up to its mission to provide constant and continuous professional development to early childhood educators.

During the seminar, the innovative projects of six global leaders from different countries such as Singapore, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Mongolia, and Bhutan were presented. As an early childhood educator, I found "Parents' Club in Mongolia" an interesting topic. In Mongolia, parents especially those in the lower income families, are busy earning money for their families, and thus, they have little time to attend to their children's needs. With that in mind, they started their Parents' Club through conducting meetings and consultations, and then later on, they held a series of parents' workshop to motivate and provide new information to the parents. The club members have been growing. In Singapore, parents are also busy working to provide for the needs of their family. Sometimes, they have very little time to participate or take part in their child's school activities. As early childhood educators, we are aware that parent and teacher collaboration is important for the holistic development of the children; so how can we engage Singaporean parents to take an active role in their children's progress? In Singapore, a highly industrialised and urbanised country, teachers can collect email addresses of parents and send information and communicate with them through emails. In this manner, information goes directly to them, and not through their helpers who may forget to relay the information or to pass the communication book. Communicating with parents through emails can be an initial step towards engaging them in being actively involved in their children's progress.

Another important topic discussed was "Policy Advocacy on ECCD in Emergencies". Sri Lanka aims to include early childhood care and development in disaster management and disaster risk reduction. It is a right of every child to be safe, and so, involving them in disaster management is a smart idea. In Singapore, for example, children are engaged in managing disaster by participating in fire drills twice a year. Children are taught how to recognise when there is fire and what they are to do in such a case. Also, firemen visit schools to impart their knowledge to the children about fire safety. Children are taught the "stop, drop, roll" actions, which are useful if they were ever caught on fire. It is just one simple movement of engaging the little children in disaster management, yet it is a huge step where the child learns about safety.

“Men in Early Childhood Education in Singapore” was a very intriguing topic. Both benefits and challenges of having male teachers were presented. Having a network of male teachers is brilliant in further engaging males in early childhood education and in providing support to them. Perhaps, we could also involve females with strong conviction in strengthening the male teachers' participation to give support to male teachers.

Lastly, the presentation on “Singapore: An Advocacy Journey Towards Education for Sustainable Development” was timely as it aimed to inculcate the fundamental values and attitudes to children towards issues pertaining to a more sustainable future. The children will inherit the future, thus, it was appropriate to involve them in making the future a good place to live in. Some schools in Singapore have recycle bins placed in each classroom where children throw used papers and other recyclable materials. Moreover, teachers make it a habit to switch off the lights and air-conditioner when leaving the classrooms. This would show and teach children about conserving energy.

The two-day seminar was very informative. It was a great experience to meet and mingle with global leaders from different countries and to gain insights from their researches. I am looking forward to more leadership seminars as such.

**Leadership and Advocacy for ECCD Seminar:  
Global Leaders for Asia and the Pacific (GLAP)  
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## **Reflections and Reports**

Daniel Wong and Alice Soh  
Members of AECES

### **Introduction**

Global leaders gathered in Singapore for the Leadership and Advocacy for Early Childhood Care and Development Seminar which was initiated by the World Forum Foundation. This was led by the Chairman, Mr Roger Neugebauer (USA), Dr Sheldon Shaeffer (Thailand), the mentor, the regional coordinator for GLAP, and other networks and support from ARNEC (Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood). The Association for Early Childhood Educators, Singapore sponsored 20 of its members to attend this seminar. In this article, two AECES members, Daniel Wong and Alice Soh, contributed their reflections and reports.

### **Reflections by Daniel Wong**

We understand the challenges faced by the countries around us. They are currently either in the process of implementing Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) practices into their curriculum or are starting to explore how the concept of ECCD is improving the education of young children. ECCD covers a number of areas, for example, those that promote learning in a diverse manner and teaching skills to the child that empowers them. These do not deviate from the core concept of holistic child development where one size does not fit all. For holistic development, "The team around a child" was introduced whereby there is need to be a multidisciplinary team supporting children and their family. We are fortunate to be working with a number of strategic partners and experts in advocating for the well-being of children and their families.

### **Presentation Reports by Alice Soh**

#### Men in Early Childhood Education in Singapore

Esther Ho, an associate lecturer at a local polytechnic and training agency, developed a network of male teachers to explore and reflect on the value of gender balance in early childhood education. This network explored the benefits and barriers to men's full participation in early childhood education and identified actions to promote these important issues worldwide. Esther also shared the myths and stereotypes about men in early childhood care and strategies for increasing male involvement on a global level.

#### Parents' Club in Mongolia

Global leader, Narmandakh Adiya, launched Parents' Clubs in June 2011 as an initiative of "Centre for Supporting Children's Growth", a non-governmental organisation. The project promoted the participation of parents and methodologies were developed to collaborate effectively with parents from schools and kindergartens in the more rural areas.

### Policy Advocacy on Early Childhood Care and Development in Emergencies

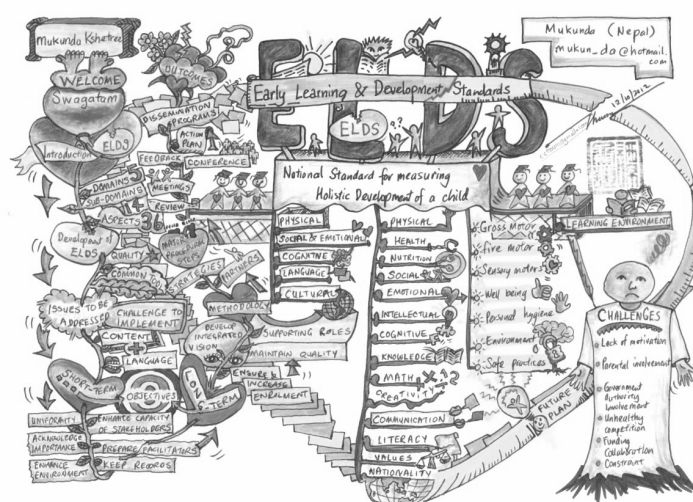
Nanditha Hettitantri is a PhD Candidate for Early Childhood at Macquarie University, Australia, since June 2012. She has been a presenter in a number of key national and international conferences on gender, disaster management and child protection. She shared Sri Lanka's well-designed Disaster Management Act and how an established institutional mechanism can provide disaster management and disaster risk reduction. This was achieved by having two government institutions working on Early Childhood Care and Development and Disaster Management come to a common agreement to integrate Early Childhood Care and Development into existing and/or new disaster management policies and practices. The two government institutions are working together in developing evidence-based studies for improvements in policies and practices.

### An Advocacy Journey Towards Education for Sustainable Development

Kelly Hor, a Principal Education Specialist at NTUC First Campus, is passionate about the landscape of early childhood education in Singapore, moving from a 'one-size-fits-all' education to one that promotes diversity, child empowerment and learner-centred approaches with emerging themes like creativity, critical thinking and social-emotional literacy. She advocates Education for Sustainable Development as it promotes early experiences that nurture the development of children's fundamental attitudes and values. Please read Kelly Hor's full report in the following article.

### The Development and Dissemination of IEC (information, education and communication) Materials on ELDS (Early Learning Development Standards)

Mukunda Kshetree is the project manager in the International Child Resource Institute in Nepal. He has successfully conducted many national educational researches and presented them in various national and international forums. He talked about how the government of Nepal formally adopted early childhood development in its core documents after the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a global leader, Mukunda Kshetree has led the process of preparing, adapting and testing these materials and would continue to disseminate them so that they become an important source of essential knowledge for ECCD centre staff in the development of young children.



Early Learning & Development Standards by Mukunda Kshetree