

Singapore

## More than 1,900 early childhood work opportunities available as part of SGUnited Jobs and Skills programmes



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By [Ang Hwee Min](#) 02 Nov 2020 12:00PM (Updated: 02 Nov 2020 11:05PM)

SINGAPORE: There are currently more than 1,900 work opportunities in the early childhood sector, including jobs, traineeships and attachments, said the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) in the latest edition of its jobs situation report on Monday (Nov 2).

Of these, the majority are jobs, with 85 per cent of them for professional, manager, executive and technician (PMET) roles such as pre-school teachers, centre leaders and childcare services managers.

Speaking at a media briefing on Monday, Manpower Minister Josephine Teo said that as most of these opportunities are jobs, it is apparent that operators want to bring people in not just for traineeships and attachments, but because they are “confident that they have vacancies to fill”.

“One of the things people may be concerned about is ‘if I don’t have the skill sets, will I be able to get this job?’. Now, in fact ... the sector actually appreciates people who bring in

transferable skills from outside this sector,” said Mrs Teo, noting that about three in four who have joined this sector are mid-career workers from other sectors.

Mrs Teo said that based on her interactions with instructors at the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC), people with “good service orientation” are strong candidates for a career in early childhood care and education.

“That would of course include people in hospitality, in the retail sector, which have been harder hit because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The NIEC team said that service orientation is a key competency, it's something that is very valuable for early childhood. But the most important of all is the love for children and the interest to care for them,” the minister said.

Despite the dip in enrolment at NIEC during the "circuit breaker" period, the institute saw a slight increase in enrolment this year, which "augurs well" for teachers already in the profession and those who are interested to join, said Mrs Teo.

MOM noted that a career in the early childhood sector can be “impactful and deeply fulfilling”, with employees taking on the “important task” of educating children from as young as 18 months.

“Going beyond education, these talents in the EC (early childhood) sector also partner parents and the community to care for the next generation, ensuring their safety and supporting their growth.”

More than 570 individuals were placed in jobs, company-hosted traineeships and attachments in the early childhood sector between April and mid-October, said the Manpower Ministry.

Educators can command salaries ranging from S\$1,800 to S\$7,600 depending on the track they are on.

For example, those on the educator track will work with children aged two months to four years and can earn between S\$1,800 to S\$3,150, while those on the leader track will take on centre or teacher leadership positions and command up to S\$3,100 to S\$7,600.

These figures were released as part of a series of updates on the labour market.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Early Childhood Development (ECDA) has worked with pre-school and childcare operators to provide about 500 short-term safe management assistant positions.

The safe management assistants who are found to be suitable matches for permanent roles may be placed in professional conversion programmes to move into the early childhood

There are "many reasons" for continuing to grow the early childhood care and education sector, said Mrs Teo.

"Top reason must be that in Singapore, we will develop every child to the best of his potential, and this starts from his early years. So that must be the driving force.

"The second is of course it's really important to support families too. And in today's context, we already have dual income families, both parents work. And a shift that will continue is that even the grandparents, many of them will continue working, you know, for a variety of reasons," she added.

"The sector has also adjusted quickly to adapt to the changes. EC educators had to innovate and create home-based learning resources. They also had to upskill themselves to leverage technology to stay connected with their students and parents," said MOM in the press release.

With a greater emphasis on the importance of early childhood development, pre-school enrolment is expected to increase and drive up the manpower demand in the sector, the ministry added.

Noting that the sector is "well and growing", Minister for Social and Family Development Masagos Zulkifli said the enrolment in pre-schools today is about 180,000 and this will grow to 200,000 by 2023.

"There are 21,000 pre-school teachers today and we are still recruiting. So we are looking at the current pool of teachers that we need, attrition rate is very low right now. And it is also a very rewarding sector for our citizens, as well as those who are looking for a job to get into," he added.

Since demand for pre-school teachers continues to be "healthy" throughout this period, the salary increases have been "good", with about a 17 per cent increase over the last three years, said Mr Masagos.

"The whole sector understands what they need to acquire (and) when they can acquire it, so that they can go up the ladder in their career. So it's a very good career sector for our citizens, for those looking for a job, and well-supported. And we welcome as many as possible to join us."

Speaking on CNA938, the academic director of St James' Preschool Services said that they are prepared to "invest" in candidates regardless of their qualification, as long as they have the "right disposition".

"We of course would like the teachers to have the requisite professional qualification for teachers, which is a diploma in teaching. But if they don't, we will support them as they pursue their studies to obtain these qualifications," said Dr Jacqueline Chung.

"For centre leaders, they need to have the requisite qualifications before they can take the position. If they don't, we're still prepared to invest in them and develop them. Most important is they need to have the right disposition, like patience and to be caring, playful, expressive and creative," she added.

Job seekers who want to become early childhood educators must obtain either a certificate or diploma in early childhood offered by NIEC or ECDA-accredited programmes.

Mid-career individuals may join the early childhood sector through the professional conversion programmes for pre-school teachers and the Place-and-Train Programme for educators to gain the necessary skills and ECDA-accredited qualifications, said MOM.

Apart from the more specialised roles that require a certificate or diploma in early childhood, there are also opportunities in ancillary roles such as in marketing, human resources, finance and administration.

"Despite being ancillary areas, these roles would still provide job seekers with a deeper insight into the EC sector, further paving their entry into the sector should they wish to embark on the educator or educators pathway.

"These roles also provide both industry-relevant skills and soft skills that can boost their chances of landing a job across other sectors," said the ministry.