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What values and from whose perspective?

Letter from Jedidiah Clarice Tan

THE recent cases involving educators with immoral proclivities are a worry. We may theorise about how important our teacher selection processes are, but a flawless process is a pipe dream. We know that interview processes are, at best, contrived.

Applicants with hidden character flaws but good academic records and professional history will slip through the cracks and into the system, perhaps driven partly by the invisible hand of the market. Even character referees and their comments can be fudged.

While I agree with a principal's comments in the report "One bad apple too many?" (Feb 13) that teachers should have "values that are in line with the core education objectives", I am left to ask: What values and from whose perspective?

As a young educator, I was puzzled when a teacher shared with her students

the details of her then double life as a pole dancer at night clubs, in a bid to better connect with and motivate a class of disenfranchised 15-year-olds.

I did not stay long enough to ask if that strategy worked.

That said, being a teacher today is probably as challenging as it was for Sisyphus to roll an immense boulder up that proverbial hill. After all, education is a multi-stakeholder endeavour and school is a microcosm of adult reality.

If our children are only mirroring what they see in real life, it behoves us to reflect on our own stake and our adult decisions. Some things such as values are caught, not taught.

On that note, parents and carers should play an active role in monitoring their children's out-of-school behaviour.

They should be audacious enough to discuss with their children sensitive and

complex issues, some of which can most readily be brought to the fore within a trusting home environment.

After having taught and interacted with children and youth for many years, I have learnt that they need someone they can look up to.

The easiest way to lose their trust in adults and confidence in themselves to make the right call in life is for adults to say one thing and do another.

■ CORRECTION

It was reported in "Eircom says earnings fall, cuts forecasts" (Feb 22) that ST Telemedia is seeking a buyer for Irish telecoms group Eircom and had hired Morgan Stanley & Co International to handle the deal. This is incorrect. Eircom, and not ST Telemedia, is seeking a buyer and had appointed Morgan Stanley. We apologise for the error.

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