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# It is money that creates social classes in Singapore

FROM **HENG CHO CHOON**

The commentary “What money can’t buy” (June 1) set me thinking about how the examples cited are applicable to Singapore, in different forms although the substance remains the same. Many times, our morals have been compromised because of money.

In the past, we had rich Singaporeans paying for kidneys from “donors” because the latter needed money to survive.

We give registration priority to children living within 1km from a primary school. Small wonder then that rich parents buy homes in the vicinity of schools of their choice.

Rich parents can also afford to “volunteer” at a school to ensure that their child has a better chance to get in two years later.

Such policies favour the rich and make the climb up the social ladder harder for the rest.

In public hospitals, Class A patients stay in air-conditioned rooms with a

television and attached toilet. He/she is given a choice of meals.

Meanwhile, the Class C patient stays in a room with six or more patients and has no choice of food. I would rather that our public hospitals have only one ward class and all patients be treated alike. Let the rich go to private hospitals if they wish.

# How to educate parents

FROM **KWAN JIN YAO**

The trend of parents seeking help on how to raise their children more effectively, as reported in “Mum and Dad want to know best” (June 9), signals two constructive developments.

First, groups of parents are more receptive to new parenting strategies and more willing to consider different methods to improve communication.

Second, the Education Ministry could potentially harness these energies and encourage parents to play progressively complementary roles in the education system.

The key is to get parents meaningfully engaged, if they desire, in the schools.

As parents hunger for more information on parenting, and as their children advance through the education

“Educators, through special sessions, could explain aspects of the curriculum and the need for nuanced disciplinary measures.”

system, they would become aware of their roles in the teaching-learning process.

There are various ways to increase this awareness.

For instance, parent-teacher meetings could go beyond discussions on academic performance per se and there could be focus group discussions for parents with common interests.

Educators, through special sessions, could explain aspects of the curriculum and the need for nuanced disciplinary measures.

They could also allow parents to join their children in co-curricular activities or community service endeavours.

Parents should recognise the importance of working closely with teachers, instead of going against them every step of the way.

Being more receptive to current pedagogies would be advantageous and could help interested parents to craft approaches at home.

If plausible, if manpower and resources permit, some of these strategies could be extended to pre-school environments.

The idea is that these programmes would serve as an extension to the School Family Education initiative by the Community Development, Youth and Sports Ministry, since education features heavily in their children’s lives.

If parents embark on this journey with their children, in spite of their busy schedules, they would not only be able to create healthy learning environments at home, but also make many academic challenges less daunting.

# A parent, a teacher but no Edusave

FROM **CHIANG MING YU**

The letter “A parent, a teacher or both?” (June 8) seems to echo one common view today among parents here: Birth rates are falling because of rising living costs, a need to be dual-income and the stress of the educational rat race.

The view is that parents are being asked to do too much when the role of parents should only be to raise children to be good people and citizens.

But what if there are parents who are planning for more children while surviving on one income, are happy to help their children with homework and who say, “Yes, we’re responsible for our children’s education”? Should not these parents be encouraged?

I know many of these parents:



**LETTER NO END IN SIGHT TO EDUCATION BUBBLE**

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They are generally well-educated, have three or more children and all of them want their children to be good citizens.

A big sending-off party for a National Service enlistee was held last month and attended by more than 50 parents and children.

One would think that such people would be held up as role models of an active citizenry.

Instead, while other Singaporean children get Edusave funds, the children of these parents do not.

Who are these parents and why are they viewed as stumbling blocks instead of pillars of society?

These are parents who have taken responsibility for their children’s education by educating their children themselves: The homeschoolers.

# Overaged pupils cause of bullying

FROM **POON YIN TENG**

I refer to the report “Teachers feel more heat from parents” (June 8). The Education Minister said the ministry will stand by its teachers in maintaining discipline.

No one realises that a major underlying cause of disciplinary problems, especially in primary schools, is when overage foreign pupils, about two to three years older and much bigger, are in the same class as local pupils. Bullying is bound to happen, which leads to lack of confidence and may eventually affect the smaller children’s studies.

Let us identify what causes the problem and contain it before we talk about dealing with it.

**THE ROLE OF THE CEA**

● The CEA was established to raise professional standards of the real estate agency industry and safeguard consumer interest.

# Real estate sellers must meet criteria

FROM **YEAP SOON TECK**

Deputy Director (Licensing), Council for Estate Agencies

We refer to the letter “No principle in CEA fee policy” (May 31).

Under the Estate Agents Act, all real estate salespersons are required to register with the Council for Estate Agencies (CEA) through an estate agent, which is responsible for paying a registration fee when it makes the application. The fee is charged as resources are involved to process each application and ensure that the salesperson’s credentials comply with the standards required in the Act.

For a salesperson who switches agents, the receiving agent has to apply to the CEA and pay the fee. This application is subject to another round of assessment to ascertain that the salesperson continues to meet the necessary criteria for registration.

The CEA has briefed agents on the process during industry dialogue sessions and through circulars.

When a salesperson is registered, the agent that supports and submits the application is responsible for ensuring that the salesperson is fit to practise and will comply with the Estate Agents Act and Regulations.

The CEA works closely with agents on this, too.

Apart from licensing, the CEA does regular enforcement work and compliance checks, investigates consumer complaints about estate agency services and implements industry development initiatives.

These will help enhance the level of services rendered and better protect consumers. The CEA also engages in public education to help consumers make informed decisions in their property transactions.

The resources and costs involved are supported by the registration and licensing fees, supplemented by government funding. The CEA is mindful of the costs. Through regular dialogue sessions with industry stakeholders, we will continue to ensure that registration fees remain reasonable.

Consumers are already paying commissions for the services of agents and salespersons. They should not be expected to pay the CEA for initiatives to raise the level of professional service of the real estate industry.



**LETTER WHAT ABOUT LANDLORDS AND THEIR RIGHTS?**

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