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MEDIA RELEASE

THE NIE NTU, SINGAPORE AND THE LIEN FOUNDATION LAUNCH INITIATIVES TO RAISE CAPABILITIES OF EDUCATORS AND NURTURE A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS IN EDUCATION

Key highlights:

- *A new Professorship in Education to attract top-notch experts in inclusive education to Singapore to nurture local talent, develop research, strengthen practices and contribute to local developments of the sector.*
- *The design and implementation of two Leadership Development Programmes for a network and learning community of leaders: Inclusion Matters and Principal Matters Plus, the latter being the first significant collaboration between the NIE and the NIEC.*
- *Develop teaching resources tailored to the local context, learning journeys and an in-depth practicum experience for educators through the Lien Foundation's partner project sites.*

With the aim of building a robust education system of the future, the National Institute of Education (NIE), an autonomous institute of Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore and philanthropic organisation, the Lien Foundation announced the launch of Project Genie (**G**reatly **E**nanced **N**etworks in **E**ducation), a broad capability enhancement initiative with programmes targeted at different levels from student teachers to sector leaders. This is to encourage interdisciplinary learning and advance educator abilities to cater for the diverse needs and the inclusion of students with special needs.

Project Genie will utilise a three-pronged approach to build up a network of leaders, enhance the quality of educator training with learning journeys and the development of relevant local teaching resources, and fostering sector excellence through collaboration. A common thread across these initiatives is the opportunities for exchanges among educators working in mainstream primary schools, Special Education (SPED), preschools and early intervention to bring about greater harmonisation across these sectors.

To achieve a future-ready education system, it is paramount that we enable our children access to opportunities through multiple pathways and lifelong learning. This partnership will contribute towards the national agenda and resources that the NIE requires to nurture a new generation of educators adept to catering for the diverse learning needs of all children in the future - where 21st century competencies (such as communication and collaboration skills, social awareness and critical thinking) are emphasised.

Project Genie is made possible through a \$7.5 million gift by the Lien Foundation.

Establishing a Lien Ying Chow Visiting Professorship and a Lien Foundation Chair Professorship

The Visiting Professorship aims to attract top minds to the Institute's that contributes to the vision of the Singapore's education system for the future, starting with the development of educational programmes and research. A local Chair will give due recognition to the advances that faculty have made. It further encourages developments in the field and strengthens the Institute's capacity to support the special needs sector.

The NIE will create opportunities for exciting collaborations between professors, enabled through the setup of an Impact Grant to support research activities or projects in this area. Various efforts including an annual symposium, consultation and engagement sessions, and public lectures will amplify best practices and create demand for higher standards in education. Please refer to Annex B for more information about the Lien Ying Chow Visiting Professorship and Lien Foundation Chair Professorship.

Professor Vivienne Riches, psychologist, educator, researcher and consultant at the Centre for Disability Studies, Sydney Medical School at the University of Sydney, has been appointed the first Lien Ying Chow Visiting Professor. She has undertaken significant research and development work for and with people with disability in areas that includes vocational training and employment, transitioning from school to post school, classification and assessment of support needs, community living, social and interpersonal skills, well-being, mental and emotional health, behaviour of concern and forensic issues, and Active Support. More information about Professor Riches can be found in Annex C.

Leadership Development Programmes and Networked Learning Communities

Project Genie will foster an interdisciplinary community of leaders in special and inclusive education, and encourage opportunities for cross-sector collaborations through two leadership programmes:

1. ***Inclusion Matters*** is a six-month guided training for leaders working in the special needs sector and wider SPED and Early Intervention (EI) ecosystem in Singapore, including teachers, principals, psychologists, AED-LBS, allied health professionals and other specialists. It will take on an experiential approach and feature different modalities of blended learning with input from experts in the industry.

2. The NIE will also collaborate with the National Institute of Early Childhood Development (NIEC) to conduct ***Principal Matters +*** (PM+), an executive programme targeting cluster-level preschool leaders and above who manage sizable operations, in anchor operators, partner operators or private sector organisations. This will be the first collaboration involving the NIEC faculty to design and co-teach. PM+ builds on a successful three-year run of the [Principal Matters](#) leadership programme for preschool leaders which ran from 2016 to 2019.

The two programmes will see two cohorts of 25 participants each, benefitting a total of 100 education leaders who will be empowered to catalyse the development of whole-school support structures for children with diverse needs. Please refer to Annex D and E for more information about the two programmes.

Enhancing the calibre of educator training and resources

a. Local teaching materials and case studies

To enhance teacher training and deepen the learning experience of educators, teaching resources will be developed to extend real-world experiences to trainee teachers. It will focus on interdisciplinary collaboration between professionals and share best practices including those from the Lien Foundation's partner project sites such as Canossian Circle of Care, Kindle Garden and Making Every Preschool Inclusive (MEPI), as well as case studies demonstrating strategies employed for the inclusion of students with special needs. Pertinent areas such as dyslexia, autism and behavioural challenges will also be touched upon. Previously limited to international resources, these new materials will expose educators to relevant practices with local context and nuances. This material will also eventually be used across the different programmes at the NIE to strengthen the theory-practice nexus.

b. Practicum and learning journeys

There will be learning journeys to the Foundation's partner project sites, as well as a one-term practicum offered annually – the intensive *Professional Inquiry into Inclusive Education* will allow 15 post-graduate or outstanding undergraduate teacher trainees over three years to gain an in-depth experience of working and learning alongside various professionals across the Foundation's project sites that have demonstrated innovative ways of working. There is an increasing need for stronger interdisciplinary collaboration and such practicum will enable educators to build up experience working with other disciplines.

c. Book Prizes

The Lien Foundation Book Prizes will be established to motivate and boost the profile of outstanding Allied and SPED educators. Four book prizes of \$1,000 each for allied educators and special education teachers graduating from the Diploma in Special Education (DISE) programme, and two Book Prizes of \$2,000 each for top graduates from the Master of Education (Special Education) programme will be awarded.

In general, Project Genie will provide opportunities for enhancing the capabilities of the institution in advancing special education, in addition to providing support to leaders and promoting research in the field.

“We greatly welcome this collaboration with the Lien Foundation. The Project Genie, with its multi-pronged approach, will strengthen our collective efforts and vision for inclusive education and an inclusive society. Its goals support the NIE’s mission in inspiring learning and align well to the MOE’s focus on nurturing confident and resilient learners. The project provides rigorous and holistic learning experiences for educators to become leaders of learning as well as developers of culturally relevant teaching and learning resources. Educators participating in this project will learn from one another as well as local and overseas experts through an expanded network of local professionals and visiting professors at the NIE,” shared NIE Director Professor Christine Goh.

Mr Lee Poh Wah, Lien Foundation CEO, said: “Schools are dynamic learning communities and part of a larger ecosystem supporting children and their families. Leaders in education should exemplify that. Our partnership with the NIE aims to strengthen the education workforce and their connections to build better partnerships. A key plank in the design of Project Genie is the creation of opportunities to improve the porosity of professional exchanges between the mainstream, special education, preschool and early intervention sectors. This will help broaden their repertoire of skills, forge better ways of working with other professionals and enable stronger inclusive practices in schools to cater to the diverse learning needs of all students.”

END

MEDIA INVITATION

Due to workplace safety management measures, we will not be hosting a physical media briefing. You are invited to attend our virtual media briefing with details as follows:

Media Briefing on the

Date/Time: **6 April 2022, 12.00pm – 1.00pm**

Organised by: National Institute of Education, Singapore

Venue: [Zoom](#)

Meeting URL: <https://ntu-sg.zoom.us/j/81398280669>

Meeting ID: 813 9828 0669

Passcode: 577087

For media briefing attendance, please contact:

Ms Chin Wen Hui

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For media queries about Lien Foundation:

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Lien Foundation

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All media personnel are invited to RSVP for the official media briefing, please confirm your attendance with Ms Chin Wen Hui (wenhui.chin@nie.edu.sg) by **Tuesday, 5 April 2022, 12:00pm.**

For programme lists, frequently asked questions (FAQ) and other information, kindly refer to **Annex A – E.**

ABOUT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (NIE), SINGAPORE

The National Institute of Education (NIE), an autonomous institute of Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore is among the world's top education institutes, renowned for its excellence in teacher education and education research. Founded in 1950, the NIE has played a pivotal role in developing Singapore's teaching workforce.

In a dynamic education milieu, the NIE prepares teachers with the requisite values, skills and knowledge to meet the continuous demands of diverse learners across the lifespan. The quality of the NIE programmes is based on evidence-informed reviews and enhancement, and delivered using innovative pedagogies in digitally-mediated learning spaces. The NIE's degree, higher degree and professional development programmes offer global perspectives through international practice and semester exchanges, while 21st Century pedagogies, multidisciplinary curricula and service-learning initiatives help to develop the holistic reflective practitioner and school leader.

The NIE is ranked among the world's top institutions for research in education and the education-related disciplines. Its research philosophy is focused on impacting school practices, enhancing programmes, informing policy formation and, ultimately, improving student learning outcomes. With its highly reputable education programmes and rich research culture, it has built strategic alliances with many other renowned institutions in the US, Europe and Asia Pacific regions.

Recognising the need to anticipate, adapt and advance, the NIE has recently identified five strategic growth areas under a new institute-level initiative, Learning Initiatives for the Future of Education at the NIE NTU Singapore (LIFE@NIE SG[®]). Over the coming years, the NIE will grow its regional and global impact in these five priority areas – Child and Human Development, Values and Ethics, Science of Learning, Emerging Technologies, and Assessment and Evaluation – to lead the future of education and play its part in helping to address Singapore and humanity's grand challenges in an ever-evolving world.

For more information, please visit: www.nie.edu.sg.

ABOUT LIEN FOUNDATION

The Lien Foundation is a Singapore philanthropic house noted for its model of radical philanthropy. It breaks new ground by investing in innovative solutions, convening strategic partnerships and catalysing action at the intersection of health and social care. In the area of early childhood development, a key tenet of the Foundation's work is grounded in the belief of providing all children with a more equitable start. [Circle of Care \(CoC\)](#), in partnership with Care Corner and NUH's Child Development Unit, aims to support children from low-income backgrounds for their transition to primary school through an integrated care model helmed by social workers partnering an interdisciplinary team of educators, therapists, health specialists and community partners. CoC now works across more than 20 preschools including MOE Kindergartens, and is a consultant to the national KidSTART programme. The [Canossian CoC](#) model uses an in-house Child Development Unit to integrate services across the

preschool, primary, special education and after-school sector within the compound of Canossaville Children and Community Services. [Kindle Garden](#), Singapore's first purpose-built inclusive preschool, was established in partnership with AWWA. [Making Every Preschool Inclusive \(MEPI\)](#) aims to strengthen co-teaching practices between preschool teachers and early intervention teachers. [Mission I'mPossible 2](#) is a joint programme with PCF and KKH that will screen children for developmental issues from as young as 2 months old. It builds on an earlier pilot, which was adapted by the government as the Development Support and Learning Support programmes. The Foundation also established the [Centre for Holistic Initiatives for Learning and Development \(CHILD\)](#) together with NUS Medicine to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to translating critical research to intervention, with the aim of improving the health and developmental outcomes of children in Singapore and beyond.

For more information, visit <https://www.lienfoundation.org/>

ANNEX A

MEDIA BRIEFING FOR THE LAUNCH OF PROJECT GENIE

Date	:	Wednesday, 6 April 2022
Venue	:	Zoom Meeting URL: https://ntu-sg.zoom.us/j/81398280669 Meeting ID: 813 9828 0669 Passcode: 577087
Time/Duration	:	12.00pm – 1.00pm / 1 hour approximately

PROGRAMME	
12.00pm:	Presentation by the NIE team
12.15pm:	Media questions and soundbite interview recording

ANNEX B

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Lien Ying Chow Visiting Professorship and a Lien Foundation Chair Professorship

- **What does the Visiting Professorship and Chair Professorship aim at?**

The Visiting Professorship aims to attract top minds to the University to contribute to the vision of gearing up the Singaporean education system for the future, starting with the development of Special and Inclusive Education programmes and research, while a local Chair will strengthen the University's faculty capacity, through a collaboration between the two professors, which is enabled through the setup of an Impact Grant to support research activities or projects in this area.

- **How does the Institute select its Visiting Professors?**

Faculty members would propose a list of renowned academics in the domain of specialization. The appointment of the Visiting Professor is confirmed and approved during the NIE Director's Strategic Review & Development Meeting (DSM).

- **What are the topics that the Visiting Professors would typically cover?**

- Recent research in the field of Special Education
- Promoting an inclusive education/society
- Approaches and strategies to promote teaching and learning in Special Education
- Engaging parents and caregivers of children with special educational needs

- **What is the typical schedule of the Visiting Professor?**

The duration of the visit is between 5 to 14 days, depending on the availability of the professor. During the visit, the professor will be engaged in giving consultations to the NIE/NTU faculty, public lectures, seminars to selected stakeholders. There may also be visits to specific institutions/schools/ministries.

- **How are the Visiting Professor or Chair Professor holding their lectures?**

There are plans for online webinars prior to the visit and in-person lectures during the visit.

ANNEX C

About Professor Vivienne Riches

Vivienne Riches is a psychologist, educator, researcher and consultant at the Centre for Disability Studies, Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney. Vivienne has undertaken significant research and development work for and with people with disability in areas including vocational training and employment, transition from school to post school, classification and assessment of support needs, community living, social and interpersonal skills, well-being, mental and emotional health, behaviour of concern and forensic issues, and Active Support. Vivienne teaches the Diploma of Disability in Singapore and Australia offered by CDS through SydneyLearning, and is also involved in clinical work at the NSW Developmental Disability Health Unit. Member of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), Member IASSID, PSYCHDD, ASID NSW and Board Director for Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID). Inducted into the Disability Employment Australia *Hall Of Fame* 2013 in recognition of an outstanding contribution to Disability Employment.

ANNEX D

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Inclusion Matters (IM)

- **What is IM?**

The Inclusion Matters programme is an executive leadership programme for leaders in the field of special and inclusive education. The programme provides facilitated opportunities for leaders from different segments of the special and inclusive education ecosystem to come together to better understand each other's vision, practices and challenges.

- **What is the purpose/aim of IM?**

Participants will be encouraged to engage in critical reflection of themselves as individual leaders as well as leaders of an interconnected network of stakeholders in a system. Through this programme, participants will:

- Appreciate the professional, cultural, and organisational contexts, and challenges in supporting children with special educational needs in Singapore.
- Examine the current perspectives, approaches and assumptions related to special and inclusive education as well as the effectiveness in promoting and improving special and inclusive education.
- Share best practices across systems and catalyse the development of whole-school support structures for children with special educational needs.

- **What is unique about IM?**

The programme offers leadership training to leaders across sectors in the area of SEN. It will address the needs of the potential participants in the following ways:

1. Opportunity to network with leaders in the education field involved in teaching and supporting students with special needs (cross-sector networking)
2. Platform to share good programmes and teaching practices that their school/centre is doing, and to discuss implementation challenges and to figure out what went wrong and how to address the challenges. Linking theory to practice in the Singapore education context
3. Discussion of school-wide practices and programmes for support of students with Special Education Needs (SEN)
4. Opportunity for site visits to observe good programmes and practices

- **How long is the programme and what is the programme structure?**

The 6-month programme comprises expert-facilitated discussions, learning journeys and critical reflections. Participants will work together on a collaborative futuring project where they envision an inclusive future for Singapore.

- **What is the programme structure?**

The programme will center on the following six themes:

- Leading Self: Mindsets and Beliefs
- Leading Teams: Coaching and Mentoring
- Leading Change: Strategy and Vision
- Leading Learning: Curriculum and Instruction
- Leading in Systems: Partnerships and Stakeholders
- Leading the Future: Collaborations and Technologies

- **Who should apply for this programme?**

- School leaders from special schools (e.g., Principal, Vice-Principal, Heads of Department) and centre leaders from early intervention programme for infants & children (EIPIC) centres
- School leaders from preschools
- School leaders (e.g., Principal, Vice-Principal, Senior/Lead Teacher (SEN), SEN Champion) from mainstream primary and secondary schools, and tertiary institutes
- Lead/senior AED(LBS) from mainstream schools
- Leaders (e.g., psychologists, allied health professionals, employment support professionals) from social service agencies, disability support, community mental health and hospital settings
- Leaders from departments at MOE, NCSS/MSF and/or MOH involved in supporting persons with disabilities

- **What are the entry requirements for the programme?**

Have relevant qualification in general education or special education. Have a minimum of 2 years of experience in the leadership role that they play in supporting students with special needs.

- **If I need the information on IM, where do I go?**

You may log on to <https://place.nie.edu.sg/> or email inservice@nie.edu.sg.

ANNEX E

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Principal Matters Plus (PM+)

- **What is PM+?**

The PM+ is an executive professional development (PD) programme for cluster-level preschool leaders and above who manage sizable operations, in anchor operators, partner operators or private sector organisations.

- **What is the purpose/aim of PM+?**

The programme aims to strengthen the participants' leadership capacity by presenting them with opportunities:

- To experience the adventure and value of self-reflection and mindfulness, as well as openness to innovation, risk, discovery and uncertainty.
- To learn knowledge, skills and tools in leadership that can enable them to navigate the tensions arising from leading EC educational institutions that are simultaneously (1) a community where learning happens, (2) an educational institution that is accountable to the local regulations and structures, and (3) a business entity that needs to be financially viable.

- **Why is unique about PM+?**

The programme builds and extends on previous successful Principal Matters programme by providing participants with opportunities to develop both their critical core skills (CCS) and technical skills and competencies (TCS) as EC leaders. Specifically, PM+ intentionally aims to strengthen CCS, while including TCS relevant to their roles.

PM+ has strong theoretical and conceptual underpinnings in its design that positions the programme as mindful adventures. This positioning couples the two underpinning themes of mindfulness and adventures so that both permeate the entire programme in its design, development, and enactment. Mindfulness focuses on who we are as human beings and as EC educators/leaders while adventures focuses on being open to risk-taking, discovery and uncertainty which are key dispositions for innovation.

PM+ recognises ECE as a complex phenomenon that requires ongoing negotiations of tensions arising from being (1) a community where learning happens, (2) an educational institution that operates within the Singapore context and its structures, and (3) a business that needs to be financially viable. The programme supports leaders in skills development, knowledge and dispositions that will enable them to negotiate

the ongoing tensions through the learning experiences in the four strands of leadership, community, educational institution, and business. At the same time, PM+ provides both structure and flexibility to enable participants to create their own meanings from their shared PM+ experiences and make sense of these experiences in the context of various leadership roles and levels among the different participants profiles.

- **How long is the programme and what is the programme structure?**

The 6-month leadership adventure programme consists of two inter-weaving adventures, i.e., an individual development adventure and a team project adventure.

- **What is the programme structure?**

Participants will have the opportunity to engage in seven types of adventure (learning) experiences including workshops, talks and interactions with local leaders, mentoring experiences and an overseas experience.

The two inter-weaving adventures and seven adventure experiences are designed to enable the participants to experience the two themes: (1) self-reflection and mindfulness, and (2) openness to risk, discovery and uncertainty.

- **Who should apply for this programme?**

Cluster-level preschool leaders and above who manage sizable operations, in anchor operators, partner operators or private sector organisations.

- **What are the entry requirements for the programme?**

Have relevant early childhood education qualifications as well as relevant leadership qualification; Have a minimum of 2 years' experience in the current/similar role that they play

- **If I need the information on PM+, where do I go?**

You may log on to <https://place.nie.edu.sg/> or email inservice@nie.edu.sg.