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Private tutor misrepresentation

We refer to the report by Jane Ng entitled “Private Tutor who charges high fees: “I was in gifted programme” and Education Ministry:”No, he wasn’t”.

We are appalled by such disregard to ethical practices by this tutor, who has made false representation to consumers. The behaviour of this tutor is clearly not acceptable and has tarnished the image of the tuition industry in general. In our view, the tutor has breached Section 4 (b) of the Consumer Protection Fair Trading Act. Consumers have the right to seek legal recourse against the tuition centre for such a breach.

Consumers are also urged to do their due diligence and check the claims by the tutors they engage for their children. They should ask the tutors for their credentials before they engage the tutor.

Lim Biow Chuan
President

The Straits Times (Singapore)

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PRIVATE TUTOR WHO CHARGES HIGH FEES: 'I was in gifted programme'; EDUCATION MINISTRY: 'No, he wasn't'

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He cleans up website after ministry tells him to remove lies about his background

A **private tutor** charging high **fees** to help children get into the Gifted Education Programme (GEP) has been warned to stop telling lies about himself.

Mr Kelvin Ong Wee Loong, 36, has long claimed that he was admitted into the gifted programme as a child and went on to be a teacher in the programme as well.

Now the Education Ministry has refuted those claims, saying it has checked and found no record that he was ever a pupil or teacher in the programme. Nor is he even a qualified teacher.

The ministry has told him to remove the lies from the website of his AristoCare centre, and he has complied.

Mr Ong, who handpicks children for his sessions and charges \$1,000 for four lessons, had previously told The Sunday Times that he was in the gifted programme at Anglo-Chinese School (Primary).

In media interviews as far back as 2007, he also said that he used to be a teacher in the programme. The ministry decided to check after Mr Ong appeared in The Sunday Times on June 3 in a story about parents sending children for costly tuition to prepare them for the gifted programme selection tests.

A ministry spokesman said: 'Based on MOE's records, Mr Kelvin Ong was neither a student in the GEP nor a GEP teacher. MOE has spoken to Mr Kelvin Ong on the matter, and warned him against making such false claims again.'

It also checked but could not find any record of Mr Ong's teaching qualifications.

This is not the first time that the ministry has taken issue with Mr Ong.

In 2010, it was alerted to AristoCare's website after it advertised the sale of the 2009 GEP Screening and Selection Test papers.

The ministry checked and found that those were not the actual papers. It subsequently alerted parents that there was a website giving the impression that it had past GEP papers for sale, but they were not genuine.

It is not known if he will face further action.

Asked what he had to say about the ministry's latest checks, Mr Ong told The Sunday Times it was his mother who had told him that he had been in the gifted programme.

'I'm not very sure. According to my mum, I was from GEP. When MOE called me, I tried to check but couldn't because I don't have records from the past,' he said.

He said he attended Clementi Town Primary from Primary 1 to 3 before transferring to ACS (Primary) in Primary 4.

The primary gifted programme starts at Primary 4, and ACS (Primary) is one of the schools offering it.

Mr Ong said he went on to ACS (Barker Road) and Anglo-Chinese Junior College, before studying mathematics at the National University of Singapore.

As for being a teacher of gifted pupils, he now claims that he was a relief teacher for two years from 2002 to 2003 at ACS (Primary) and 'helped out' with the gifted classes.

But this has been disputed by the school.

After checking the school records and speaking to long-time staff, ACS (Primary) vice-principal Grace Khoo told The Sunday Times: 'Kelvin Ong was not a pupil of ACS (Primary) - GEP or otherwise. Neither has he taught in the school (GEP or non-GEP).

'All the long-serving teachers in the school say there was never a Kelvin Ong who taught here as a relief teacher.'

The parents of at least two children have also asked him to remove from his website 'testimonials' purportedly coming from their children saying they had done well in the Maths Olympiad after attending his sessions, and would recommend others to join.

The parents said their children never wrote any such thing.

Mr Ong has cleaned up that bit of his website too.

He also no longer claims to have been a teacher in the gifted programme.

'Please say that I'm a GEP trainer, not GEP teacher,' he said.

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