



**Teck Whye Primary vice-principal Suraj Nair Venugopal (left) won the Academy of Principals Prize for Leadership Learning while North View Secondary vice-principal Remington Chen received the Lee Kuan Yew award yesterday.** ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

# School leaders' challenges in 'complex' environment

By KEZIA TOH

SCHOOL leaders have to be “reflective practitioners” as schools are becoming more complex, said Education Minister Heng Swee Keat yesterday.

This includes dealing with a new generation of more tech-savvy students, he said. He also cited a different breed of parents as another challenge for school leaders.

“We have better-educated parents who do not hesitate to make known their expectations and who have also, sometimes, very different views about what their child should do.”

Mr Heng cited how – since his ministry’s workplan seminar last month – he had received letters from some parents who thought he was trying to “dumb down the system”.

He had announced moves to abolish academic banding and for schools to develop their own niche programmes, on top of tackling the bugbears of homework, tests and tuition.

To allay parents’ fears, he said: “I will, at some point, assure them that this is not the case – we are trying to develop the students much more holistically.”

Mr Heng was speaking at a graduation dinner for the six-month-long National Institute of Education Lead-

ers in Education Programme (LEP) that trains vice-principals before they take over as principals.

A total of 29 candidates, including two school leaders from Brunei, received their graduation certificates yesterday.

The course is similar in scope and intensity to executive courses in business schools, but with a focus on education and leadership.

Each LEP participant is attached to a school for the duration of the course, to be mentored by the principal and to work on a value-adding change in the school.

One of these projects, reflecting Mr Heng’s sentiments, was carried out by North View Secondary vice-principal Remington Chen, 44, while he was on a six-month stint at Ahmad Ibrahim Primary.

To get pupils excited about Singapore’s history, he converted a media resource classroom in the school into a history gallery, and digitised artefacts dating back to World War II so pupils could view exhibits in 3-D.

Mr Chen said: “This immerses the children in an environment that attracts them and sets the scene to learn current and future issues for Singapore, such as graciousness and integrating foreigners.”

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