

Leading the Way to the Future

Almost 50 principals were appointed at the 9th Appointment Ceremony for Principals—a befitting finale to the end of another eventful year for the Ministry of Education (MOE).



Guest-of-Honour Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister for Education, commended MOE's system of school leadership as being the key strength of the Singapore education structure.

Forty-nine principals were appointed on 28th December. Of these, 16 were newly appointed Principals and 33 were serving Principals who will take up appointments in other schools. In his speech, Guest-of-Honour Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister for Education, declared MOE's system of school leadership as the key strength of the Singapore education structure.

What makes us distinct is that "It is a system built on both individual and collective strengths," he explained. In choosing school leaders, Singapore differs from its counterparts because right from the beginning of an education officer's career, the Ministry identifies and develops those with an interest in taking on leadership positions and with the right traits. In addition, MOE also brings in individuals from other backgrounds, mid-career, to be developed as education leaders.

Passing the Mantle

In the search for ways to pass and share expertise, within school clusters and the country, Mr Shanmugaratnam pronounces that the Ministry is "promoting a culture of school leaders taking responsibility for grooming their peers." The Minister recognises that experienced Principals are a valuable resource in many areas of management. He acknowledges that the Principals' significant knowledge of school management and people skills is not information that can be compiled in brochures.



The new Principals marching to the enthusiastic applause of the audience as they get ready to receive their appointment letters at the 9th Appointment Ceremony for Principals.

Due to this, the Academy of Principals is working with MOE to pilot a one-year mentoring scheme for newly appointed Principals. Interested Principals will be paired with experienced school leaders, who are identified by the Academy. The Minister is confident that this mentoring scheme will build on and augment the practices already in place within school clusters, "It will involve partnerships and two-way learning, with ideas and reflections being passed on from both experienced and new Principals."

Support Within the Fraternity

Mdm Liew Wei Li, newly appointed Principal of Xinmin Secondary, has the distinction of being the youngest Principal in this batch. She thinks the Principal mentoring scheme is a terrific idea. "As a young Principal, I look forward to being able to seek advice from more experienced colleagues." She cites areas like incident management and ideas on staff development in which she would appreciate the guidance of a mentor.

Mr Lee Yan Kheng, Principal of Tanjong Katong Sec School (TK) comments on how the scheme would enhance and add to the rigour of the current system of leadership development. "(It's) an admirable effort by the Academy of Principals, one that reflects the closeness of the fraternity. It is in essence, an endeavour by Principals for Principals."



A touching performance of 'You Raise Me Up' by a group of incumbent Principals showed the multi-talented nature of our schools' leaders.

As a young Principal, Mr Lee believes he would be able to benefit from the scheme "through leveraging on the vast knowledge base, wisdom and experience of my mentor. It's also good to learn from another perspective from a fellow school leader."

In his speech, Minister stated, "The second feature of quality leadership has to do with grooming and nurturing teachers, including new leaders." TK's Mr Lee fully realises this significance, "The school leader is no longer the solution-giver," he reflects, "The drive for change and excellence is shared and arises at every level and in every quarter, allowing the direction and vision to continue even after the leader moves on."

Mr Lee further notes that the key role of school leaders would be to create organisational environments that inspire, support, and unleash the imagination, creativity and initiative that exists at all levels. "That's the kind of school leader I want to be!" he passionately exclaims.