



Miss Chiang Wai Leng (left) and Mrs Belinda Charles, former school principals who continue to work for the Ministry of Education in other capacities since their retirement. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

Retired principals returning to help

MOE keen to make use of their knowledge and experience

By JANE NG

WHEN Miss Chiang Wai Leng retired as principal of Townsville Primary in 2007, she did more than just sit back and enjoy her golden years.

The 65-year-old used the opportu-

nity to complete her Master's in Education from the University of Melbourne. Now, armed with her degree, Miss Chiang has returned to the Ministry of Education (MOE) to co-write a science teaching guide, train teachers and sit on interview panels to hire them.

The ministry is keen to make use of the experience of retired educators like Miss Chiang, who has spent more than 40 years in the education sector.

It said it has rehired more than 80 senior education officers over the past

three years. These include retired senior teachers and principals. They can help in training and selection interviews, and work as counsellors in schools.

"Retired principals possess a wealth of valuable educational leadership and management experience and institutional knowledge. In order for the education service to continue to benefit from their contributions, MOE has encouraged them to serve in different capacities," said a spokesman for the ministry.

VALUABLE RESOURCE

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Miss Chiang Wai Leng, retired principal of Townsville Primary

Retired principals said they are keen to share their knowledge with younger educators.

Miss Chiang said: "Retired principals are like a pot of gold just sitting there waiting to be tapped. If I were just to sit and waste away the days, all the knowledge inside me would go to waste. I might as well share it with teachers to encourage them."

With many of the baby boomer era principals retiring in the past five years or so, educators said they believed the number of former principals returning to the education sector had increased, although this was only anecdotal.

Mrs Belinda Charles, 60, retired at the end of last year as principal of St Andrew's Secondary, then returned in April as the dean at the Academy of Principals, where she used to be president.

She hopes to continue to play a supporting role to help current principals in their work. For example, she could send them a monthly note sharing pieces of her experience, or recommend leadership articles that may be useful.

When she was a principal, she served as a link between St Andrew's Junior School and St Andrew's Junior College, building the St Andrew's Village spirit and establishing a 12-year programme in rugby and band music, and a 10-year programme in hockey.

In her new role, she also plans to organise sharing and networking sessions where principals can support one another and share best practices – something which more clusters of schools are now doing.

"I'm a born teacher and I like sharing," she said. "I retired never to stop work, but to do a different kind of work – something broader and more impactful in the long term. The wealth of tacit knowledge that principals have is something we should share."

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