Miss Seah Jiak Choo was Director General of Education from 2004 to 2009.

During her tenure, she led the transformation of lower primary education with an emphasis on the learning (rather than the teaching) experience. Through the introduction of SEED (Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development of Pupils in Primary Schools), a ground-up approach for teachers to design the most appropriate strategies and programmes, primary school students were provided with an approach that stimulated learning.

She also contributed significantly to the enhancement of teaching using technology through the development of the third Masterplan for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education. She put school leaders at the heart of this drive, challenging them to provide the direction and create the conditions, instead of leaving it to more technology-savvy colleagues. This role school leaders had to play was a tough yet critical one, but it did lead to a distinct and positive cultural shift in innovation with ICT in schools.

As a steady advocate for the professional and leadership development of teachers, Ms Seah made significant contributions to two comprehensive reviews to enhance the recognition of the teaching profession in recent years.

Miss Seah has a favourite personal quote: *“We were not created to be indoor plants but sadly, many of us are just that* .” She says that increasing stress at work, being desk-bound for long hours and experiencing much anxiety over personal and work issues are all signs that one hasn’t really taken care of oneself and this constant state of being sedentary is likely to result in health challenges sooner or later.
“We all need to get outdoors and smell the roses more often.”

She takes her own advice and looks forward to regular holiday treks in different parts of the world as it gives her something to look forward to, forces her to constantly keep fit, exercise and train no matter how busy she gets, and motivates and encourages others to follow her example.
“Exercise by way of hikes, walks and jogs, has always helped me maintain clarity and balance. I take time to pray, think through how to solve problems at work and even compose short

speeches as I walk or jog. I have always advocated spending time outdoors to recharge and reconnect with self and nature."

The physical challenges and group dynamics involved in group trekking also taught her a lot about the uncertainty of life. *"The unknown terrain ahead, unpredictable weather conditions and different fitness levels among the people you are with, are part and parcel of the challenge - mishaps and things going wrong in this unique environment are a given. You've just got to be prepared for anything and everything!"*

What has given Miss Seah the most satisfaction in her 32-year career is seeing her students grow up into responsible, caring adults. "*Imagine the satisfaction of seeing some of your naughtiest students become teachers and aspiring to be principals, so that they can, so to speak, 'pay it forward'. Seeing my students change and grow over time is my greatest reward. Passion, purpose and perseverance are key to success in any worthwhile project. Passion is especially important because it is contagious and keeps you going when the going gets tough.*

Ms Seah continues to contribute to MOE in the capacity of an advisor to the Ministry on the professional and leadership development of the teaching profession as well as other education matters. "*I am glad to return to teaching - I just love to teach. I have opportunities to teach in the LEP and when invited, at zonal seminars involving school leaders and teachers. I am teaching the Bible in adult classes at my church and I enjoy that tremendously. Just as I've been trekking for well over 20 years, I will continue to explore new heights and wider horizons in 2015 and beyond."*