

LESSONS FROM LIFE NOT TEXTBOOKS

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IN TODAY'S wired world, where a click of the mouse can yield answers in a matter of seconds, one's classroom can be anywhere from the bedroom to the fast-food outlet, where the laptop shares space with greasy french fries.

So, why attend school and listen to teachers go on about information you can pick up on your own?

The digital age – and the more “sophisticated” students it has spawned – has ensured that the role of teachers has to evolve.

Said Mr Martin Tan, executive director and co-founder of non-profit youth leadership organisation Halogen Foundation, Singapore: “For teachers, it is no longer just imparting knowledge, but imparting life.”

Rapid globalisation also means a need to train students for the future and not just to deal with today's challenges.

“Teachers need to think up possible challenges students might be facing in the future and cater their teaching towards that,” said Mr Tan. “If we want them to go in ready to fly, we need to look at how the world will be 10, 15 years down the road – because it'll be a total-

teachers “add to the diversity of experiences within our teaching force and bring new perspectives to the classroom”.

With their real-life experiences, these teachers can be a student's window to the big, wide world out there, whether the view is the dynamic finance and banking sector, the stimulating legal profession or the creative advertising industry.

And students will respect that. Mid-career teachers that the ministry has recruited over the years have proved their mettle.

Hai Sing Catholic School principal Charles Leonard Surin, for example, became the first mid-career entrant in the teaching profession to head a school this year. He had spent 12 years

in advertising, marketing and business development before answering the call of teaching.

But where does that leave those who had joined the teaching force fresh from graduation and stayed faithful to the profession?

“There is a quip that some with 30 years' experience have just had one year's experience repeated 30 times – that would be terrible,” said Academy of Principals president and St Andrew's School principal Belinda Charles.

It really “depends on how well

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