

# Getting To Know Our Students

Lim Ai Lay, Master of Education (Special Education) graduate



**Lim Ai Lay** is currently working as the Principal of the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore School and is a Master of Education (Special Education) graduate.

## Can you share with us your professional life's journey and at which point in your career did you aspire to do a higher degree programme?

After graduating from NIE's Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programme in 1992, I started my career as a mainstream secondary school teacher. As my career progressed from a teacher to a school principal, I developed a desire to upgrade myself by pursuing a master's degree. Work and family took first priority and this pursuit was shelved until 2012 when I left the Ministry of Education (MOE) to spend more time with my child. So I seized this golden opportunity to sign up for the Master of Education programme at NIE. After 20 years in the education service, I have found a passion and desire to know more about the Special Education, an area that has started to receive more attention. So, in August 2013, I started my master's programme specialising in Special Education.

Upon the completion of my programme, I re-joined MOE in December 2015 and was seconded as the Principal of the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore School (a school for children with multiple disabilities).

## What attracted you to a higher degree programme at NIE?

NIE is one of the few academic institutions in Singapore that offers the Master's programme in Special Education. As an NIE-trained teacher, I had this natural inclination to pursue a higher degree at my alma mater.

## How would you describe your interactions with NIE faculty members?

Personally, I see the NIE faculty members as facilitators who helped me to scope my learning. As an adult learner in this master's programme, I decided on the areas that I was interested in and they provided the professional advice and knowledge to help me generate my learning.

## What were some difficulties you faced from the programme?

Returning to books after 20 years was no easy feat for me, and this was especially so during the first two courses of my programme. Reading through the academic readings and journals didn't make much sense to me initially. But having the desire to learn more about Special Education provided the motivation to push myself and the steep learning curve that I had to overcome was my greatest achievement.

## Has the programme been beneficial to you in bringing forth changes in your organisation?

It has been a very exciting and fulfilling six months in my new school. With the knowledge that I had acquired during my master's programme, I feel more equipped and confident to support my staff and students. I can understand the challenges faced by my students, staff, as well as their families. I have also brought with me the good practices from my experience as a mainstream principal which will add value to the school.