By KOK XING HUI

NATIONAL Institute of Education (NIE) students will soon be able to benefit from a $2 million fund that will give out a scholarship, a student achievement award and three book prizes each year.

The Tan Poey Quee Teaching Excellence Fund was set up thanks to a $1 million donation from retailer Mothercare, which was matched equally by the Government.

The fund will be administered by the NIE and will be launched yesterday at Mothercare's 30th anniversary dinner. Education Minister Heng Swee Keat was the guest of honour.

Mothercare chairman Pang Kim Hin said the donation was made to honour his late mother, who was deeply passionate about education.

However, he wanted the fund to go towards “something which does not duplicate what the Government is already doing”.

The scholarship is the first for students of the Doctor in Education programme at the NIE. From next year, one Doctor in Education student will be awarded the scholarship each year. The scholarship will give out $18,000 a year for two years, but is subject to renewal in the second year.

The total sum of $36,000 over two years will cover the full course fees, although the duration of the course ranges from 3 and a half years to seven years, depending on whether the course is taken on a part- or full-time basis.

Each year, the fund will also give out $1,000 to the top Doctor in Education student and $500 to the student with the best dissertation, starting next year.

There will also be two annual $500 awards that will go to NIE student teachers in the degree and diploma programmes who do well in their practicum – when they are attached to schools to gain teaching experience.

“It just seems to fit in really nicely with what I wanted to do,” said Mr Pang, adding that he has every intention to top up the fund and has instructed his children to keep it going in “perpetuity”.

In his speech, Mr Heng called the fund “a good example of how the Government and the private sector can work together to create opportunities and to prime capabilities in the education sector”.

kxinghui@sph.com.sg