Improving the quality of education

Experienced educators Tan Dai Hwee and Chua King Loo enhance their professional knowledge and experience with the NIE Doctor in Education programme

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A lifelong journey to broaden their perspectives: doctoral students should consider the National Institute of Education (NIE) Doctor in Education (EdD) programme.

Launched in 2012, the NIE EdD is specially designed for professionals in critical fields. It has the rigor and expectations of a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy), but with professional touch.

Says NIE's assistant dean for Doctor in Education, Graduate Studies and Professional Learning, Emeritus Senior Fellow Dr. Tan Mei Choon: "This unique offering seeks to draw from and build candidate's experiences through interactive coursework and in-depth field-based inquiry in order that they become leaders in their respective professional practice.

Students are given the flexibility to complete coursework at their pace of learning, and the support to complete their assignments to meet deadlines during their candidature.

The programme comprises four core courses, two required courses in one of four concentrations and two electives, which will culminate in a dissertation. Full-time students can complete the EdD within three to five years, and part-time students can complete their candidature in four to seven years.

Applicants must hold bachelor’s and master’s degrees with good grades from an approved university and at least four years’ relevant experience in education or an education-related field.

Professional commitment

Madam Tan, 49, is a lead teacher in the curriculum at Anderson Secondary School. She is also responsible for the child welfare teachers and is leading a team to study how to enhance student self-assessment. She also shares knowledge at the Centre for Asian and Singapore Studies.

In 2016, she embarked on the NIE EdD programme to sharpen her skills.

Says Madam Tan: "I immediately established a theoretical dimension to lend more credibility to our work, so that I could combine educational theories with professional practice more meaningfully during sharing sessions."

As a lecturer, Madam Tan has an excellent understanding of theories of Learning and Motivation, with her in-class teaching, "what happens inside students' heads" and, in turn, ensuring that "real learning" has occurred. Her dissertation will examine the effects of different types of feedback and correction on students’ academic performance and motivation.

Madam Tan is an independent researcher. She is also part of the leadership team of Kaleidoscope Child Development Centre, a local firm that works with children who have special needs.

Another NIE EdD student is Ms Chua King Loo, 41, senior director and principal of private childcare centre, KidzMonte Child Development Centre. She is also a part-time lecturer with various institutions.

She started the NIE EdD programme in January to gain more knowledge and skills in the field of education, especially in early childhood education, to match the growing expectations of her client base. She hopes that after completing her Master of Education in 2016, she will be more equipped to meet the demands of her work.

Says Ms Chua: "The philosophical ideas in the sampled readings pushed me to step forward as a leader. This is a big leap from the master's programme, where it was more practical and application-based.

Her concentration, Educational Leadership and Change, motivated her to engage in research that is related to early childhood leadership theory.

She hopes that her research will be able to contribute significantly to the industry, as there is not much in the early childhood context in Singapore and the region.

Supportive culture

As part-time students, Madam Tan and Ms Chua have to juggle studies with their full-time jobs and family. Most of the time, Ms Chua works.