

# Getting To Know Our Professors

## Associate Professor Tan Aik Ling



### A/P Tan Aik Ling

is the Deputy Head (Teaching & Curriculum Matters) and an Associate Professor with the Natural Sciences & Science Education (NSSE) Academic Group.

### Why do you enjoy teaching and mentoring higher degree students?

Being a teacher is one of the most fulfilling things anyone can do with their life. It gives us the opportunity to influence the ideas and thinking of our higher degree students who are also change-agents in their workplaces. Teaching and mentoring higher degree students is also a means to share my passion with others and to ensure continuity of the research ideas that I have learnt from my own mentors.

### What research area(s) are you working on now? How does it impact your work at NIE?

Classroom interaction in the science classroom, the nature of science and also the professional development of science teachers.

I also infuse research findings into the classroom for pre-service teacher education so that decisions made are all evidence-informed.

The research that I am working on is labour and time-intensive since it involves going to schools and working closely with teachers and students.

While difficult, I truly believe that this form of research is impactful and can bring about real changes in classroom practices in science.

### Why is NIE a good place for you to do your work?

NIE is a knowledge creating factory. It is like an ideas playground, making dreams a reality. It enables us to have intellectual freedom and a progressive culture to test our ideas and theories. In NIE, you get to read, write and discuss your ideas freely with friendly colleagues in a lovely campus that is filled with greenery and fresh air. That, to me, is an ideal working environment.

### What does NIE offer to higher degree students that is unique?

NIE has a friendly, rigorous and nurturing environment that allows the students to pursue their ideas and ideals. As many of our higher degree students are pursuing their studies on a part-time basis, faculty members in NIE are understanding of work-life-school balance and hence, are flexible and creative in devising ways to ensure that the students are able to meet deadlines for assignments and thesis. This requires mutual respect for each other's (supervisors and higher degree students) time and aspirations.

### How would you describe NIE higher degree students?

They are committed individuals who are eager to learn. Many of the higher degree students that I have come across are experienced teachers, counsellors, or administrators who are very successful in their respective workplaces. They enrolled into a higher degree programme with NIE with the objective of learning how they can make even greater impact to their workplaces and to a larger international community. This spirit of continuous lifelong learning is admirable and I am glad that NIE is able to offer these successful professionals a platform to meet their personal aspirations.

### What have you learnt from your students?

Perseverance and resilience. Many of my students have to juggle between work, family and their studies. I have had Masters students (at least three) who become mothers in the midst of writing their theses! They worked through their maternity leave, toggling between their duties as both new mothers and aspiring academics! All of them eventually completed their higher degrees and got to enjoy time with their children. I learnt from these students that as long as they work hard and are disciplined, they can achieve whatever they set out to do.