

Getting To Know Our Students

Cheryl Chen, PhD student



Cheryl Chen
is a PhD student of
Visual and Performing
Arts (VPA) Academic
Group.

What attracted you to a higher degree programme at NIE?

NIE was a natural choice after I made the decision to pursue a doctoral degree in the field of education. I wanted to obtain an internationally recognised and reputable qualification that could establish my academic and professional standing as a doctoral candidate and graduate. As the provider of pre-service teacher education, I was assured of the pedagogical quality of the programme and faculty members in NIE and knew that I would receive an excellent experience.

How would you describe your interactions with NIE faculty members?

Beyond the wisdom and guidance they provide, every encounter with the faculty leaves me humbled and inspired. Many of the faculty members are giants in their research fields and yet they are always generous in sharing their knowledge and experience. Their passion for exploring deeper into their subject of study and commitment to the often tedious process, also inspires me to do my best and believe that my little contribution can potentially go a long way. My supervisor and the academic group have also been extremely supportive, constantly providing opportunities for me to expand my capacities as a researcher and educator by sending me to speak at conferences and teach undergraduate courses.

What is your research on?

I am interested in the evolving education landscape in Singapore and the negotiation between the perpetual emphasis on examinations and an increasing emphasis on 21st century competencies. As an educator who has taught different profiles of students studying in junior colleges and Institute of Technical Education (ITE), I am keen to discover how non-traditional forms of teaching can be effective for student learning, particularly for students who are not academically-inclined in the Singapore context. At the moment, my research focuses on the specific medium of drama: how drama can be applied in the primary and secondary classrooms as pedagogy for subjects within the national curriculum.

What impact do you wish to make with your research?

I hope that my research findings can inspire more teachers to explore and experiment with new approaches to teaching that can be beneficial for student learning in their classrooms. I believe that teaching innovation and equipping teachers with new pedagogies and paradigms will contribute to the move towards achieving the vision of 'Thinking Schools, Learning Nation' in Singapore.

What is the best part of being a student at NIE?

This may sound frivolous but the best part of enrolment is the exposure and the chance to interact with authors of seminal books and papers in the flesh. Previously static quotes and citations come to life when the author adds weight to the revelation in person! The intellectual and moral support given by these renowned scholars is very encouraging and necessary to new academics like myself to grow in ability and confidence.

How will the programme prepare you for your career progression?

The exposure to other scholars and educators with the Ministry of Education (MOE), Singapore during my candidature has expanded my theoretical thinking and provided opportunities to discuss and debate ideas for future effective implementation. I believe that the academic and practical experience of investigating how drama can be an efficacious medium for teaching and learning is invaluable to me as a researcher. Upon graduation, I will be better equipped to embark on a journey as an academic who documents and theorises new educational practices, and as an educator who experiments with innovative pedagogies such as drama.