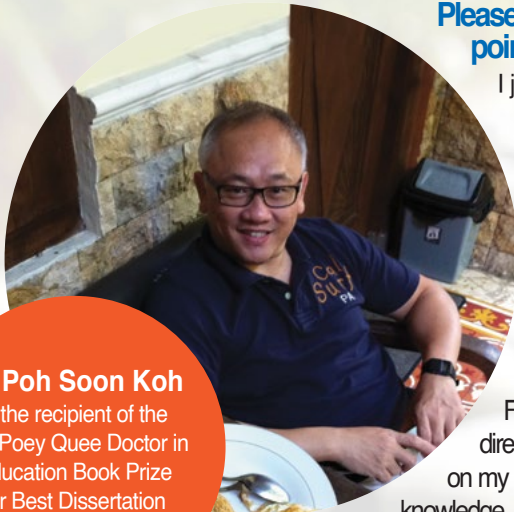


# Getting To Know Our Students

Dr Poh Soon Koh, Doctor in Education (EdD) graduate



**Dr Poh Soon Koh**  
is the recipient of the  
Tan Poey Quee Doctor in  
Education Book Prize  
for Best Dissertation  
award for 2021.

## Please share with us your professional life's journey thus far and at which point in your career did you aspire to do a graduate programme?

I joined NIE as a full-time lecturer with the English Language & Literature (ELL) Academic Group after having headed departments in secondary schools. The courses I am teaching in NIE are those that prepare prospective teachers to teach the English language in secondary schools. While teaching these courses, I was (and still am) constantly reminded of the challenges that beginning teachers had in putting into use what they had learnt in NIE, especially when I was supervising student-teachers during their practicum. The desire to further understand the theory-practice gap in learning was the main reason I signed up for the NIE Doctor in Education.

## What attracted you to your chosen programme at NIE?

Firstly, it was the coursework. I felt that the coursework would immediately provide me direct access to the world of research without having to spend a large amount of time groping on my own. Secondly, what NIE offers that other institutions are unable to, is the professional knowledge of the local education context and the opportunity to interact with scholars with international perspectives who have conducted research in Singapore schools. The studies that came out of NIE have gained international standing.

## Could you share with us some interesting facets of your programme?

Firstly, the different ways in which each tutor conducted their module were interesting. Some conducted it in a seminar style, some used small group discussion with a tutor providing guidance to each group. Some allowed participants to direct inquiries during class time. Secondly, my classmates came from different professions and from both the public and private sectors. We looked at things rather differently.

## What was the best part of being a student at NIE?

NIE has a strong standing both locally and internationally. Its strong relationship with the Singapore Ministry of Education facilitates doing classroom research in Singapore schools. The library provides excellent services and resources.

## How would you describe the learning culture in NIE? Can you share at least one specific learning experience that had left a deep impact on you?

A lot of open discussions, dialogue and exchange. There's space for learning, thinking and reflecting. I remember the discussions I had with my supervisor. She allowed me full rein to manage the different stages of my dissertation work. She allowed me to pace myself. I was tempted to just follow her ideas but she was careful to make space for me to develop my own perspectives.

## Could you share with us more on your dissertation that you did for your Doctoral programme?

My dissertation goal was to find answers to the question: why do many beginning teachers do not always put into practice what they have learnt in their teacher preparation programme? I examined the social discourses and the cultural practices that predisposed three beginning teachers of the English language to think and act in certain ways that are not always aligned with what they were taught.

## Has your experience in NIE been beneficial to you in bringing forth changes in your area of work?

Yes, for sure. I can now think more deeply at the conceptual level. Being a practitioner, I am now more able to understand the many factors at different levels (macro and micro) that contribute to the challenges teachers face in their teaching.

## Would you recommend the programmes at NIE to someone else? What would you say about it?

I would. I would say "There would be something that NIE offers that would be relevant to your professional needs. Find it and prepare to work hard (in a positive way!)."