

TEACHING IDENTITY MOULDED BY SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media plays a large role in shaping students' teaching identities.



Sean Dolan and Belle Bi discuss teaching identity

Social media plays a large role in shaping students' teaching identities. This was one of the unexpected findings in the research conducted by New Zealand Tertiary College (NZTC) Postgraduate Program Leader Sean Dolan who is studying towards his PhD.

He has undertaken a longitudinal study into student-teacher identity following the journey of six international students as they completed an NZTC Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education).

"All student teachers will experience the same academic courses and the same practical experience, in terms of Field Practice, but all of them come out quite differently. My research explores the effect that training has on the teacher at the end of it all," said Dolan.

A Chinese social media messaging platform called WeChat, as well as Facebook groups, helped students in the study adapt to life in New Zealand as well as adapt to a different philosophy and methodology of delivering early childhood education.

"Adjusting from countries that have quite traditional pedagogies where the focus is on a teacher-led classroom environment to early childhood which is more child orientated and follows the child's interest is a huge conceptual leap for the student and we need to recognise that this takes time and requires a lot of support."

Belle Bi, 39, is from Beijing, China and is one of the students who participated in Dolan's study.

She says NZTC supported her to learn different concepts such as critical thinking which helped her evaluate her previous experience within early childhood education in China and cherry pick parts that she liked, moulding it into concepts she has learnt in New Zealand, such as the play-based model, to form her own philosophy.

She took an informal leadership role on social media and within NZTC tutorials, discussion forums and Block Courses to help younger students who were struggling to adapt to concepts as well as life in New Zealand.

"In most Asian countries, the younger ones look up to the older ones who have experience. I have experience and I want to help the younger ones learn," said Bi.

The early childhood education groups on WeChat discuss concepts relating to the sector but also information and advice about life in New Zealand.

Advice on where to live, transport, and where to buy Chinese vegetables are subjects discussed as well as biculturalism and giving each other ideas on activities that they could undertake with the children in their centres.

After completing her graduate diploma, Bi was employed by her Home Centre, Three Kings Kindercare Learning Centre in Auckland, New Zealand.

Although she has finished studying, she is still active on WeChat and attends meet-ups on subjects such as te reo Māori to continue her learning journey.

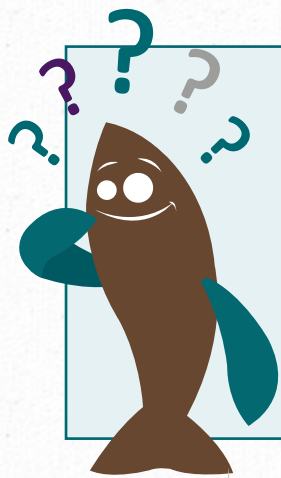
Dolan says one of the key findings of his research was how proactive students were at finding their own support networks when they arrived in New Zealand using WeChat and Facebook as ways to connect.

NZTC discussion forums, Block Courses, tutorials, strong relationships with their Associate Teachers and a connection between the theory taught at NZTC and the practice they experienced during Field Practice were also instrumental in shaping teacher identity.

Dolan is now in his sixth year of studying towards his PhD part-time and will submit his research in February. He will be publishing articles on his findings in the NZTC research journal **He Kupu** in the coming months.

FIVE KEY INGREDIENTS FOR LEADERSHIP

Leadership skills improve with practice. This was one of the key messages shared during an engaging presentation by international keynote speaker Luis Hernandez at the 2016 New Zealand Tertiary College (NZTC) Symposium in August. The co-author of *Learning from the Bumps in the Road* and frontrunner in leadership and management topics outlined five key ingredients to be an effective leader.

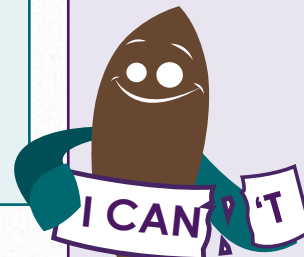


1. Curiosity

"I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious."

- Albert Einstein

Never lose your appetite for learning more about early childhood education. As an alumni member you have access to online research journals on the **NZTC Alumni** website. We also post monthly articles on relevant topics related to early childhood education.

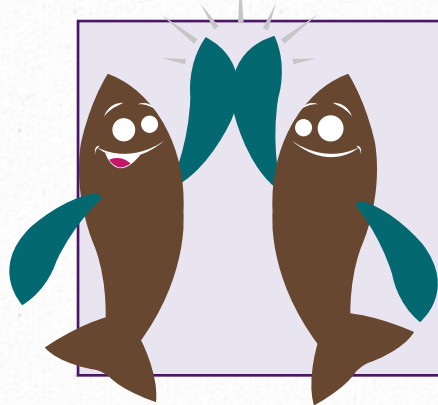


2. Confidence

"It is confidence in our bodies, minds, and spirits that allows us to keep looking for new adventures."

- Oprah Winfrey

Confidence can come from many different places including achieving a goal or overcoming adversity.

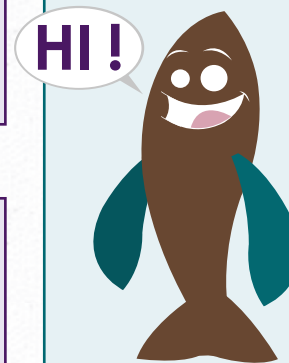


3. Team

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

- African proverb

Small gestures like celebrating your team members' birthday or engaging in activities together can help foster a sense of team. Be people focused and support your team members to thrive.

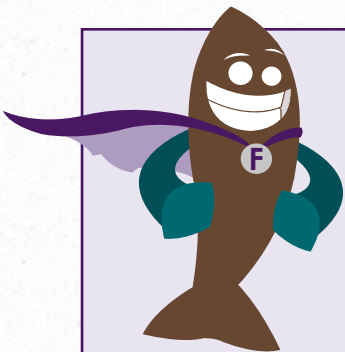


4. Communication

"I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening."

- Larry King

A tip for effective and clear communication is to be an active listener. Often when people talk to each other, they don't listen attentively and get distracted.



5. Fearlessness

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."

- Helen Keller

Don't be afraid to take risks and implement new ideas that you or your team have researched. Risk taking can expose great opportunities that may have remained uncovered.

If you've been thinking about developing your leadership and management skills you may be interested in our **Postgraduate Certificate in Education (Leadership and Management)** qualification.

To take advantage of this professional development opportunity contact enrolments@nztertiarycollege.ac.nz

BECOME AN ASSOCIATE TEACHER WITH NZTC

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NZTC Community Liaison Rebekah Clearwater

Do you want to give back to the early childhood education sector? Mentoring New Zealand Tertiary College (NZTC) students as an Associate Teacher (AT) can be extremely rewarding as ATs guide students to grow in competence in their practice. NZTC Community Liaison Rebekah Clearwater explains what's involved below.

What's involved with being an Associate Teacher (AT)?

It's about mentoring and supervising students while they are completing the practical component of their qualification in licenced early childhood centres. When a student first comes to the centre, the AT needs to make their policies, philosophies and expectations clear. Then the AT needs to be able to give

timely feedback, and be accessible to the student in case they have any questions. On Field Practice placements, the AT needs to be available to talk to the student and their Visiting Lecturer about how they feel their placement has gone and to identify the student's strengths and areas for further development.

Why would it be beneficial for an alumni member to become an AT?

NZTC supports our ATs in a number of ways. We hold free professional development workshops on a number of ECE topics held at centres all around New Zealand. ATs have a dedicated website to assist them in their role which contains free access to online ECE journals and we post monthly articles on the latest research in ECE. We also give our ATs a 'heads up' on special deals and events.

What motivates ATs to continue mentoring NZTC students?

We often hear that mentoring a student is beneficial for both the student and AT. Students benefit from the guidance of an ECE professional and ATs can put their leadership skills to good use. The centre gains an extra pair of hands while the student learns and ATs enjoy seeing students work their magic at the centre. Centre's often employ their students after graduation, if there's a vacancy available. ATs feel that they are contributing something significant to the wider sector - and rightly so!

What requirements do you have to meet to be an AT?

Our ATs, like our students, are diverse! We need you to hold teacher registration and a full practicing certificate and be enthusiastic about building up the next generation of competent, professional ECE teachers.

How do you apply?

All you need to do is email me atsupport@nztertiarycollege.ac.nz and I will guide you through the process.

INSPIRATION CORNER

Christmas is just around the corner! Searching for some inspiration to get you through the busy months ahead? Here's some inspirational education quotes to remind us that we work in one of the most exciting and important professions in the world.

"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela

"When educating the minds of our youth, we must not forget to educate their hearts."

- Dalai Lama

"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today."

- Malcolm X

"Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn."

- Benjamin Franklin

"For every one of us that succeeds, it's because there's somebody there to show you the way out. The light doesn't always necessarily have to be in your family; for me it was teachers and school."

- Oprah Winfrey