
Title	Graduate programmes and research at NIE
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**Graduate Programmes and
Research at NIE**

Lee Sing Kong, Dean, Graduate Programmes and Research Office

The re-organisation of NIE has established a Graduate Programmes and Research Office. The function of this office is to promote research at NIE as well as being responsible for the development of the many graduate programmes offered by NIE.

Since the formation of NIE in 1991 as part of Nanyang Technological University, the Institute has established a sound research record. This research has usually reflected the interests of an individual or a group of colleagues. The result of these endeavours is that the academic staff at NIE has published extensively and has been well represented at international conferences. There has been a steady increase in both the number of students pursuing graduate programmes and in the number of graduate programmes offered. Academic staff will continue to undertake research that is of personal interest to them and that is relevant to the educational context of Singapore. This is central to any University.

However, after 10 years of operation it is time to reflect on the future direction of research at NIE. In addition to research undertaken by individuals or groups, the question arises as to whether NIE should establish a defined research agenda. The remainder of this article will focus on this reflection.

If the Institute is to excel and be recognised as a major-research centre that will be recognised on the international scene as a leader, NIE needs to identify niche areas. In identifying these niche areas we must be cognisant of the fact that NIE exists within the context of education in Singapore and these areas should reflect this context. Based on this consideration we have identified 4 niche areas that will be at the core of NIE's research agenda.

They are Mathematics, Science and Language (English and Mother Tongue) Literacies and, Information and Communication Technology.

(a) *Mathematics and Science*

The recent TIMSS and the TIMSS retest results show that Singaporean students did extremely very well in Mathematics and Science relative to their international counterparts. Continued high levels of performance in these subjects are a key to the future success of Singaporean, in fact, for any country, in a global industrial society.

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Lionel Pereira-Mendoza, (Editor)
S. Gopinathan,
Chang Shook Cheong, Agnes,
Diong Cheong Hoong
Cameron Richards

A concentrated effort in research to **maximise** our students' potential in learning mathematics and science must continue to be **emphasised**.

(b) Language

This area is of particular importance within a society such as Singapore. For any **country** to be **economically** successful **effective** communication skills in English are essential since it is the **lingua franca** of international commerce. However, in an ethnically diverse society such as Singapore, where English is not the **Mother** tongue for many students, the issues of bilingual education take on specific importance. **Mother** tongue is central to the cultural values and identity of a **society**. For these reasons research into effective language instruction, both English and Mother Tongue, is the other focus of the research agenda.

(c) An Information and Communications Technology environment

Over the past few years Singapore has spent a significant part of the budget **on** equipping schools with the hardware and teachers with the skills to **effectively** integrate technology, specifically computer technology, into the classroom. This provides an excellent base on which to build an **Information** and Communication Technology paradigm for implementation at the school level. This third niche area will investigate not only the effective use of ICT in the classroom, but also the issue of how classrooms, support structures, and how other facilities should be designed for education in the future. This "support paradigm" may be very different from that **in** the past and it may be necessary to completely **re-conceptualise** the organisation of the institution that has been labelled - a **school**. **This** research agenda is currently a work in progress. We are now **finalising** it and look forward to its **implementation** in the decade ahead. Further details **will** appear in future **issues** of the NIE Researcher.