

Getting To Know Our Professors

Asst/P Rhoda Myra Garces-Bacsal



**Asst/P Myra
Garces-Bacsal**

is currently the Programme Leader of the Masters and Bachelor's Programme in High Ability Studies and Gifted Education at the Early Childhood and Special Needs Education (ECSE) Academic Group.

Why do you enjoy teaching and mentoring higher degree students?

I have always thought of the classroom as both my playground, and my stage. I love the dynamic interaction between myself and the students allowing a 3-hour course to come alive with ideas, shared experiences, lessons learned and insights gained. I always come out of a class energised, feeling prompted to reexamine my own values and philosophy, and wondering how that lived interaction with students can feed into my next lesson.

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

At the moment, I am heading a funded research on the reading lives of teachers in Singapore. One of my lifelong advocacies is to inspire more teachers to read, not because they have to but because they want to. In light of the National Reading Movement that Minister Yaacob Ibrahim has been promoting to inculcate this love for reading in the community, the research takes on greater relevance and meaning. It is my belief that being an avid reader can help pave the way to becoming a more thoughtful, more nuanced and more sensitive educator. I am hoping that our research results would take us to the next phase of our project; which is to enable us to build capacity of teachers in schools to become lifelong readers.

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

There is a synergistic interaction that has been strategically built into NIE's system with teaching, research, and service woven together quite seamlessly. Not

only does the institution provide us with the opportunities to conduct research that would ultimately have an impact on teachers in schools – in terms of both sharing of best practices and even policy changes – it is also constantly shifting and changing to make itself more relevant to the growing needs of the community. There is also the global component that allows faculty, staff, and students to learn from the best and the brightest in the world who visit our institution.

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

NIE not only offers the pedagogical skills and know-how that will equip teachers to make use of evidence-based practices that will bring out the best in their students, it also provides a thoughtful space for educators to reflect on why they do what they do. In a society that is so results-driven, higher degree classes provide that safe space where educators can collaboratively discuss relevant research findings, classroom issues, and rejuvenate their understanding of what being an educator means.

How would you describe NIE higher degree students?

While we do get a variety of students, I am glad to share that most of them show remarkable commitment and tenacity, and are very goal-driven.

What have you learnt from your students?

I am a nerd. I love reading. I love writing. This is who I am. I am blessed and grateful to have the opportunity to meet many like-minded individuals with my own students who are determined to constantly upgrade their skills and expand their sensibility about not only being a better teacher but also being a more compassionate, empathetic, kinder individual. It is a privilege to see the world through my students' eyes and travel this journey with them.