

Getting To Know Our Professors

Associate Professor Sivakumaran s/o Ramalingam



A/P Sivakumaran

is currently the Assistant Head of Asian Languages & Cultures (ALC) Academic Group. He is also the Head of Tamil Language & Culture Division and the programme leader of Master of Education (Tamil Language) at the ALC.

What research area do you specialise in and how does it impact your work at NIE?

My research interests are mainly in Tamil literature, the teaching of Tamil language and how ICT can be used in the teaching of Tamil language in schools. The knowledge that I have gained allows me to share interesting information about the richness of the Tamil language to student teachers. I believe this knowledge will equip my students in spreading the passion of learning the Tamil language to their students, thus ensuring that the Tamil language will continue to be a "living language," as advocated by the Ministry of Education.

How did your interest in the research area come about?

Ever since I was young I was always fascinated by the use of Tamil words, content, form and the crafty usage of grammar in Tamil songs, poems and speech of renowned speakers. An inquisitive mind led me to ask a lot of questions about the language and prompted me to do my research in Tamil literature. As quoted by a great

Tamil poet, "யாம் பெற்ற இன்பம் பெறுக இவ்வையகம்", which means "I want to share the richness and the joys which I have received, with the world".

Could you share with us some interesting facets of your research area?

During my research, I found out that Tamil literature was created in Malaya even before the British influenced the Tamils to migrate to Singapore. Some of the local Tamil literature contained evidence about places in Singapore during the 1900s and unique Tamil words that were coined and only used in Malaya (Singapore).

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

Located far from the city centre, NIE is located in the heart of nature. This provides researchers and educators with a peaceful environment, and at times, it allows us to draw inspiration from it. NIE allows us to conduct research and to teach the findings of our research to student teachers. In this way, new educational ideas are shared in schools more quickly. NIE only accepts the "crème de la crème," to its teaching fraternity; this allows us to trade knowledge and skills with the best around the globe. Therefore I consider our institution as one of the best to work in.

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

The uniqueness of the higher degree programmes offered in NIE has to be credited to its assessment methods and the way it creates a platform to widen one's knowledge. The majority of its higher degree programmes do not limit themselves to just testing the application knowledge of the students; but instead, encourage students to pursue evidence-based practices such as research and collaborative learning.

What have you learned from your students?

Students who join NIE in this era are more skilled in using the latest ICT tools. This has allowed me to learn and in return, teach others how to use ICT tools effectively in the teaching of the Tamil language. Students are living examples of work-life balance. As holistic development is also part of education, I do embrace and learn these aspects from them as well.

What advice would you give to those who would like to pursue a higher degree programme?

Do not pursue a higher degree for the sake of collecting another certificate. If you have an unquenched thirst to know more about a certain subject, you should do a higher degree. While doing a higher degree, the area of research should be something close to one's heart; this will help you in carrying out the task(s) with commitment, interest and truthfulness. One who engages in a higher degree programme should also develop a mindset that it is not the end point of one's paper chase. It is a continual cycle of learning which enables us to unlock unlimited possibilities.