

Getting To Know Our Students

Dr Nazir Amir, PhD graduate



Dr Nazir Amir

is currently working as a Lead Teacher at Greenview Secondary School and is a PhD graduate of Natural Sciences & Science Education (NSSE) Academic Group. He was also a recipient of the President's Award for Teachers in 2014 and Fullbright Distinguished Award in Teaching Programme in 2016.

What attracted you to a higher degree programme at NIE?

When I first started teaching in a secondary school, I found that hands-on lessons alone did not necessarily engage the academically 'at-risk' students that I teach, as they were easily prone to distraction. This led me to initiate a part-time PhD research study (whilst teaching) to explore, identify and develop feasible teaching approaches that would work well for these students. My supervisor's area of research is something that I am passionate about. He amazed me with his self-made science toys and demonstrations that I found would be of much help for my Normal Technical (NT) students – and it did!

As my PhD was very much involved in the teaching of my subjects to NT students, it mattered to me that my supervisor was not only familiar with my teaching subjects but also had background knowledge of the students that I dealt with on a daily basis. It also helped that my supervisor was also formerly a teacher in Singapore, and could understand the school system well.

NIE is located in the same country as I teach in - this helps in that I can communicate face-to-face with my PhD supervisor on a regular basis, and work with him to share our research findings to educators in Singapore and at international levels.

What was your research on?

Through classroom action-research, I developed the 'Relevant, Appealing and Personal (RAP)' pedagogical approach, where lessons are crafted to not only relate concepts to the real world and students' own experiences, but also with the promise of making them appealing to keep the students intrinsically motivated and on task. The 'RAP' pedagogical approach has contributed to the engagement and motivation of Normal Technical (NT) students, getting them to develop positive attitudes towards their studies, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects.

How would you describe your interactions with NIE faculty members?

Completing my PhD research studies under the wonderful supervision of A/P R. Subramaniam has allowed me to realise the importance of research in conjunction with being a classroom teacher. As part of my research studies, A/P Subramaniam guided me to look into the literature to find ways that would get my NT students excited about learning physics content while at the same time giving them room to be guided in showcasing their creativity through knowledge from physics.

I am deeply appreciative that my supervisor had a lot of belief in my academic and research potentials. This led him to provide me with lots of ideas and opportunities for me to grow as a teacher-researcher, such as encouraging me to present papers at international conferences and getting publications in peer-reviewed international journals and book chapters.

Has the programme benefitted you in your career development?

Being a teacher-researcher has led me to become a more effective teacher, which in turn has had a positive effect on my students' learning. Doing research has also allowed me to explore, identify and develop teaching strategies that work well for my students. I've also learnt the importance of sharing such strategies in peer-reviewed international journals and book chapters, and in presenting them in conferences.