

A STUDY ON NIRMALA INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION: ITS ORIGIN AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE STABILITY OF EDUCATION IN THE STATE OF GOA

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Abstract

Education is described as a process of systematic instruction that involves the transmission of knowledge, skills, and character traits. Teachers are highlighted as crucial figures in the development of students and the future of a nation. The paper emphasizes the importance of preparing and training teachers not just for academic and professional concerns but also for their influence on students' overall growth. The role of teachers in empowering students to make life choices is underlined, with a call for educators to inspire and guide students effectively. The Nirmala Institute of Education in Goa is acknowledged for its significant contributions to education in the region since 1963. Further the study draws on Aristotle's idea that teaching character is best achieved through example and emphasizes the importance of passionate, caring, and knowledgeable teachers. Goa's high literacy rate and low dropout percentage are attributed to the dedication of teachers and teacher training institutes.

Keywords: Education, Vocational Training, Teachers, Skill, Knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Dictionary defines Education as a process, receiving or giving systematic instruction at school or university levels. It is the transmission of knowledge, skills and character traits. Today's students are the professionals of the future and the education at school lays the foundation for their career. The teachers play an important role in career development of an individual and the future of the nation. They are the primary facilitators of students' intellectual, social, psychological, emotional, and physical growth; therefore it is important to enhance their preparation and training to perform in the classroom and to know their influence on their students more than academic and professional concerns. A child is taught almost every subject in school to empower him/her to make a choice in life. The teachers should be formed in such a manner as to form, inform, reform and transform this tangible clay into a strong baked pot thus nourish and cherish this life with utmost care and love. The Nirmala Institute of Education, Goa's first educational institute of its kind has made tremendous contribution to the Goan society since 1963.

The Origin of NIE

Nirmala Institute of Education (NIE), Goa's premier Teacher Training Institute, was

established on 20 June 1963 by the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary under the guidance of Dr. Teresa Kalathiveetil in response to the then urgent need for trained teachers for the Post Liberation Goa. It was initially affiliated to the Bombay University, with B. Ed and D P. Ed. (Diploma in Primary Education) courses and from 1985 affiliated to the University of Goa, recognized by the NCTE (National Council of Teacher Education) as an only college until 1993. The Ex-Principal, Dr. Rita Pais¹, pronounces with pride that it is still the most sought after educational institute because of its unwavering commitment to the high quality education. Many of the heads of the schools today, were the beneficiaries of NIE proudly admit it as a reality. Many schools still prefer to appoint the teachers from NIE without much hesitation for the way they are been trained, the skill coupled with values.

Academic Courses Offered

From the beginning NIE has made a commitment to Goa offering courses specially designed to cater to the needs of the community, providing a number of formal and informal, short term and long term courses such as Bachelor of Education two years, Bachelor of Special education (is currently unavailable) in keeping with the government policy of inclusive education to students with special needs is paramount. Another important certificate course offered on regular basis at NIE is Pre-school teacher education one year course since 1975, The Cambridge International Diploma for teachers and trainers- offering opportunities for the trainees to get employed not only in the state of Goa or in the country but also in different continents. Each year through the various B. Ed and D. Ed colleges around 800 students pass out eligible for the post of a teacher but the available vacancies in Goa are few. Thus it is important to train and prepare youngsters to move out to wherever vacancies are available, says Dr. Delia Antao, the Principal in-charge of NIE today.

Another important field of education taken into consideration was to prepare counselors for schools to meet the pressing need of the time. NIE was the first to introduce a nine months Post Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counseling, affiliated to the University of Goa and a Master's degree in Wellness Counseling since 2015. Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) – R7 to train counselors in the area of HIV/AIDS, Nodal center for children 1098 (Child line- women and children), M. Ed part time/full time was offered. Infused with the confidence of NIE's capacity in bringing about a change in people's mindsets the TATA Institute of Social Science (TISS) chose NIE as a training institute for Goa for the Saksham project in the year 2009. NIE reaches out to the victims and their families with necessary counseling and support.

Besides these a number of Add on courses are been held as a part of the B. Ed training to create Social and religious awareness. NIE also celebrate the sports day, talent search, internal assessment research – to meet and interview people, collect data (exposure to the world outside), YRC trainings (First aids) etc. NIE also offer trainings to teachers in the college or in schools, student- trainees go out to villages with awareness programs such as health care issues at the coastal areas – kidney stone due to salt water, work with community as part of curriculum, civic awareness like motivation and education of the rural population on the importance of attending the Panchayat meetings, etc. Through the Mediation center opened in 2022 in collaboration with the Jesuits in Goa, with a motto “Live in harmony improve the

society”, settle conflicts in families in issues related to marriage or property, which are very common now, helps to reduce court cases, financial loss, avoid further conflicts and unpleasant relationship, on a win to win basis.

The Humble beginning of NIE

NIE started with 30 seats for B. Ed and around 20 for B. P. Ed. in the beginning on the basis of priority and recommendations at Institute Piedade, Panjim in 1963 slowly begun to grow and cater to 100 students each year. The staff and management chose the student trainees through written and oral interviews from among the many applicants. Today there are various reasons for the choices of careers including that of teaching. There are also a lot of competitions entering into the teaching profession like the multi-super-specialty and multi-national companies’ job selection and criteria. Only those who give their best will be chosen after passing through the interview and entrance examinations.

The Initial Trials and Hardships for Growth

At the time of liberation most of the trainees were graduate teachers teaching in one or the other schools in Goa and are recommended by the managers of the schools who spent the mornings in schools teaching and attend B. Ed classes in the afternoons that would begin from 2.00 pm. It was indeed the transition period for all schools and a trying time, as each school was required to have a trained graduate teacher to avail the government grant in aid. Their teaching periods were adjusted in such a way that they could give a full day’s service in the school by 12.00 or 12.30 pm. and leave for NIE. The schools in Goa have always been running from 8.00am to 1.30/ 1.50 pm. Though it was a bit hectic the teacher-students didn’t mind the trouble as they had a focus. Mr. N.T. Sebastian², a retired Geography teacher of 94 years, recalls with nostalgia that he had come to Goa after his graduation from Kerala to do business and had done business for a year. But the opportunities for teaching with a government salary of rupees 140 plus the managements paying another 140 made a good salary and a good reason to take up teaching. He along with his nephew, N. D. Sebastine,³ a Physical education teacher in his 80s recalls that a great number of men and women from outside Goa were employed in different schools in Goa. They had a wide range of opportunities to choose schools as per to their interest. Mr. Sebastian recalls the first year of his teaching was a total failure due to lack of language competency and a good number of students failed. But the next years were entirely different as teaching became a passion, could easily master the spoken language skill. Every student enjoyed learning and he could produce a cent percent result.

In the 1960s, 70s and 80s a good number of teachers in Goa were from outside Goa, either from Kerala, Maharashtra and a few from Bihar or Karnataka and other parts of India. The reason was the Portuguese did not give much importance to higher education in Goa but only the lyceums, which gave primary education in Portuguese. With the liberation of Goa there came about a great demand for teachers and the schools were given grant in aid only if they had graduate trained teachers. During the first few years the students were very much older in age than the teachers. After liberation under the recommendations of the Jha commission more and more schools mushroomed in Goa. Most of the Parochial schools (today known as DSE,

Diocesan Society of Education) were running in the priest's residences and church area with smaller partitions.

N. D. and N. J. Sebastian recall that the students who studied in the free Government Marathi primary schools would join the higher primary from class V to the English medium private schools. There were around 20 to 25 students in the higher classes. Discipline, value education, religion and moral science classes were part of the teaching. Every day begins and ends with a prayer. Every first Friday a special Eucharistic celebration was organized for students and teachers. Christmas was a time most of the students, irrespective of religion, waited eagerly for the varieties of interesting activities organized in schools and outside.

Lived Experience of a Professor

Rhoda Almeida, A retired professor from NIE says "I feel overjoyed to say that I was a student of Nirmala Institute of education in 1971. After I finished training I was invited by the then Principal Dr. Teresa Kalathivetil to join the teaching staff. Her words still ring in my ears when she said "Rodha, I want you here, I know you will give your best" and I did do that. There was no looking back after that, no other job or place could ever make me give up this invitation which was so dear to me". She further says "my principal was first in rank and first in importance, impartial to the core and ever ready to praise all of us for whatever small effort we put in to give our best to the institution. My thirty four years of service at NIE was filled with happy memories. She still cherish the memories of NIE in the bottom of her heart even after two decades of retirement. She further recalls commitment and dedication of her colleagues to the student community and to the institution. All of them worked hard to keep the flag flying high as it were the first teacher training college in Goa. Together they worked to fulfil the objectives so that could give Goa the best teachers who would in turn produce the best citizens.

NIE has produced some of the excellent teachers. A good number of them took up the place as Principals and heads of higher secondary and High schools in and outside Goa. They have proved to be the best administrators and organizers giving their best to the student community as well as to the society even today. Our goal is to provide dedicated teachers and we set an example through our own lives reaffirms Mrs. Almeida. She was proud to state that today when she meets some of the ex-students; the hearts sing praises and recall the wonderful time they had as teacher trainees. NIE believes in the total development of the teacher trainee so that they in turn can give their best to this beautiful state of Goa.

Lived Experiences of the Teacher Trainees at NIE

A reasonably good number of teachers who passed out the portals of NIE at various times of history were asked to share their experiences through Google Form and undoubtedly almost all of them have varied positive thoughts to share. Some of their experiences are mentioned below-

"It was a beautiful experience to recall the life at Nirmala Institute of Education. The teachers were very professional and kept us on our toes. They helped to build confidence, enjoyed the elective of Classroom Research, the group was too good under the mentorship of Dr. Denzil Martins. Many could recall his guidance on the elective subjects as well as

Mathematics teaching methodology with a smile on their faces. He was a man of few words and more actions. Mr. D'Souza, the Geography Professor was too good at his lectures and more on his fatherly care for his trainees, used to spend even the evenings to perfect the students under him in their best performance even for a cultural event. Some say that the teaching aids they prepared and used as teacher-trainees are been used even now as teachers in schools for their daily lessons. Mr. Carvalho and Ms Sharmila Veloso were the best English lecturers, help in the preparation of lesson plans and the execution of those lessons. No marks will be given if the lesson is not as per expectation. Perfection was the hallmark of Ms. Veloso. And she produced a good number of excellent English teachers for Goa during her tenure. Mrs. Rodha Almeida for a History teacher was the perfect example. A drowsy student in the class was awakened with a question by name. No one would be distracted and gave the complete love and attention to her excellent History classes. The time spent at NIE is the most memorable one for almost everyone.

Each teacher, a teacher trainee in NIE, had volumes to share on their subject and teaching and the training received from NIE. A History teacher says that the students learn to appreciate historical facts, bring about political and civic consciousness and develop language skill. Teach Accountancy ensuring that the student acquired good foundation on the subject and apply what they learn to their profession in the future. Most students dislike Mathematics but the teacher using her learnt skill, induce interest in the students and motivate them to do their daily lessons taught in school. The Konkani language teacher takes a lot of interest to improve the verbal and written language in students and instil in them the love for mother tongue because many do not like to learn it. Quite a good number of students choose Portuguese or French as the third language in place of the Mother tongue Konkani/Marathi. These students are given ample opportunities to master the language and motivated to improve the written and spoken skill. The teachers use different teaching methods to make learning interesting. Today many schools have become smart schools with smart board, smart class rooms, smart teachers, smart students, etc. so learning is also become smart. Some of them also use the fun way teaching with teaching aids and power points, activity based learning, interesting and useful assignments, etc. Most of the teachers expressed that there is no compromise on discipline though the disciplinary actions vary from time to time and ace to place in keeping with the civil and government law. Another extracurricular activity organised in some schools is the rain tree community service rendered during Carnival⁴.

Lived Experiences in College and at Hostel

Divina Rodrigues aged above 68 says teaching was her passion and after four years' of teaching she went to do her Bachelor of education at NIE. The experiences of learning at Nirmala give a lot of nostalgic memories to most of the teachers. The well planned program with experienced and committed staff, good accompaniment and above all the peaceful and friendly atmosphere with good infrastructure makes Nirmala a unique place for all its associates. The college is located on a hill, away from the crowd and traffic, to reach the college most students walked up the hill lack of bus services to the college premises. Because of the distance, many girls

preferred to stay in hostel. The hostel girls were always put in a group together for the group activities so as to plan, practice and prepare the event well. One example to prove this is the Eid al-Fitr celebration of 2009 with gymnastics for an hour by the hostelites was well performed and appreciated by all. There were also ample opportunities for group study, visit to the library and to prepare lesson plans well. The practice teachings were also allotted in keeping with the conveniences of the trainees in most possible cases.

The Learning Experiences at NIE

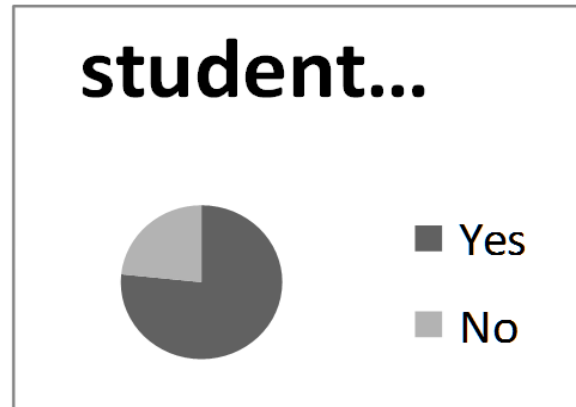
The classes were held in the afternoons from 2 to 5 p.m. in the initial days to cater to the trainees who were also teachers on regular basis in some schools. Many of the untrained teachers in a regular school taught the whole morning taking almost 8 periods and then travelled to NIE to attend classes. But they were all happy that they could do justice to both. And the management of the school as well as the college was very thoughtful and understanding towards the struggles of these students. Some of the teacher- trainees felt that they were on pins as they began with the practice teaching. On one side they had to attend classes, prepare lessons, observe the peer lessons, write report and manage a family, they also had co-curricular activities – to practice and perform. Some students were married, mothers or expecting mothers. Some women trainees have given birth to a child, taken a short break and completed successfully their studies. But there was joy and contentment as they have achieved something and have got into a job immediately. Almost everyone agrees that the one or two years of hard work and training was worth the trouble as it truly molded and trained in such a way that the best came out. The professors at NIE were very strict with regards to the approval of lesson plans, practice teaching and in the examination related responsibilities. No easy way out. The block teaching days were enjoyable being with the students and doing all types of jobs as allotted by the principal or the teachers. The tough assignments were given marks very stingily by the professors who taught the trainee to be generous to their students in schools. Though the student trainees at NIE didn't stand on the top of the rank list of the university with its competitors they always stood first in terms of placement of jobs and performances in schools.

Lessons Learnt for life

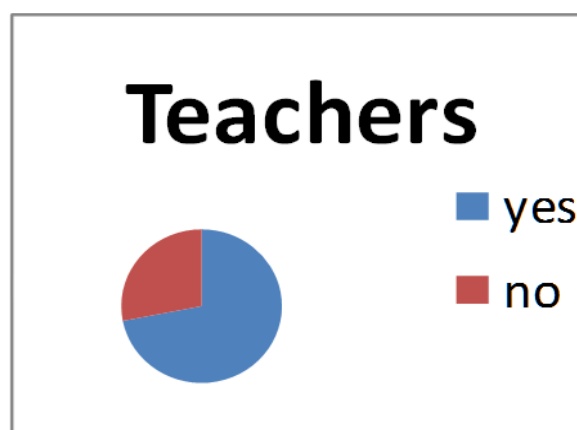
Most of the teachers who passed through the portals of NIE have shared the following as the outstanding Learning experience:

- Do not compromise on quality
- Call the student by name while taking the roll call and not by numbers.
- When you have the freedom, you work well - as you are free from any blocks to brain and mind. Thus, give respect and freedom to your student fraternity too.
- Be a mentor and not a dictator, guide but do not impose your thoughts and ideas.
- The teacher plays an important role in the life of every child – respected and loved.

Data Analysis



A set of questions were sent on Google Form to the heads of High and Higher Secondary Schools to know how many of them completed their teacher training through Nirmala Institute of Education. Above 80% of the respondents were the alumni of NIE. Most of the respondents said that it was the best institution and consider it as the best opportunity to learn from it. It is very close to the heart of many with all the good and not so good experiences and with the teaching and non-teaching staff. The quality of teaching at NIE was very good and the time spent there has truly motivated us to be good teachers and administrators today. Some others have expressed that for the first time experienced as a boarder - a homely atmosphere with motherly care expressed in freedom. The staffs undoubtedly were well experienced and committed to their vocation. The opportunities to give lessons in different schools built confidence. Though the one year course was hectic with all its demands it kept us busy and made learning interesting.



Among the teacher respondents above 70% were the alumni of NIE. The questions in Google form were sent to different schools, randomly and the responses were received in a satisfying manner. Most of the respondents who replied agree that it was the best time that they spent at NIE, that they learnt a lot of lessons for life, truly enjoyed learning, mastered a number of

teaching techniques and ideas to impart knowledge to the younger generations, very much enriching experience, learnt to love the students and the subjects well; some others expressed that they felt as they entered the campus that this is a perfect place for them, got admission and it was a year of their life that they enjoyed the most. Yet some others expressed that NIE has not only given training to teach well but also to impart values to the students through the classroom teaching. The lecturers were very good and very excellent with the subjects they were dealing with. They were approachable and friendly as well as the colleagues were helpful and pleasant. The lecturers expressed care and love for every student and in the holistic development of every student in every field was taken care of. Being a one year course, it was rigorous but it helped to build confidence, to manage the time well, have respectable team work, to give and receive constructive feedbacks and to support and assist one another.

A good number of the teachers said they enjoyed every bit of it. There were lots of activities with lots of learning. They were even taught to grow organic vegetables. During the time as a student they have been able to develop a way to learn and interact with others to a degree that has also helped to mature into a better person. NIE made me not just a teacher but the person I always wanted to be. Many have expressed that they have become a good trained teacher because of NIE and also have learnt a lot in teaching and organising other activities in schools. The staffs, especially the sisters (nuns), were very loving and compassionate. They were also visionaries. The English professor while teaching us the methodology and skill in classroom teaching said in 1999 – 2000 that 20 to 25 years from now there may be no classroom teaching and everything will be through the latest technology. This became a reality in the form of the Covid-19 where all schools had to be closed down and teachers had to find means and ways to reach out to students. All had to equip themselves with the new technology and keep the learning going and interesting. The infrastructure is of top notch. Technology was very well incorporated by the staff. The support staffs are very warm and helpful.

Effects of Learning through NIE

On How the education through NIE has helped the trainee in the future as a teacher, most of them had volumes to share and some of the responses are recorded as below:-

The teachers focus on teaching with morals and values in class in the hope of making a better people and nation. They teach students not only syllabus but life skills as well. It is very important to believe each child and the hidden potential within; the teacher as a facilitator keeps this in mind and helps the children to identify themselves. One of the teachers expressed that she always tells the students that one should always say “I can do and I will do it”. Whatever may be the circumstances one should never give up. And strike off from our vocabulary the words like ‘I can’t’, ‘it is difficult’ or ‘impossible’”. To encourage public performance of the shy and introvert, the class teacher always give training and opportunities to say the daily prayers or the thought for the day through the intercom or mikes and slowly initiate them into more difficult and better things.

Most of the teachers try their best to impart the best subject knowledge to the students, improve results and inculcate discipline. Another teacher expressed that her passion and love for her

subject and her students were the living examples to love and learn the subject. Most of the students hate history for its historical facts and figures but a teacher says through the subject of History, students learn how to appreciate historical facts, bring about political and civic consciousness and in English perfect the language skills through various inter house and inter school competitions and skill based learning. The Institutions they work also have helped to better the learning outcomes through activities and programs assigned and opportunities offered and society-outreach programs organised in collaboration with parent-student communities.

Two Years Course and its Challenges

In keeping with the Government policy B. Ed. Degree became a 2 year course like that of the D. Ed. Education since 2014. NIE was challenged with all colleges to improve their infrastructure and provide better learning facilities to cater to the two years course with sufficient faculties. Most of the experienced staff had retired and a set of new staff who were not as proficient as the old ones had to manage this challenging and changing time. Added to it all was the birth of some more new colleges that offered tough competition. But the able and experienced Dr. Rita Pais challenged all challenges and got everything well organised and settled without any hassle and buzzle. Many of the young teachers who passed out through the portals of this premier institution recall the experiences as great and wonderful. NIE had plenty of activities that enriched the life of the trainee to enhance his/her potential and capabilities with personal touch from all the mentors. NIE offered ample opportunities to stabilize the teaching skill, to be resourceful in organising various activities, to be better leaders, to explore ones potential, to be systematic in teaching, to reach out to the weak and the uninterested through CCE (Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation), etc. Most of the student trainers recall the two years as very hectic with loads of activities but a memorable one as it helped to build confidence and self-esteem with the lessons of hard work and perseverance. It all became a reality only with the coordinated efforts of the Principal, professors and the trainees.

METHODOLOGY

A case study was undertaken on the first and the only religious⁵ teacher training institute of Goa, Nirmala Institute of Education, since 1963. The author herself is an alumna of the same institute and is enjoying the fruits from this wonderful alma mater. The principals (present and ex-principals) were met personally and interviewed. Data is collected from the actual records of its archives, met administrative staff, teaching staff, ex-students who are teachers or retired teachers of an age ranging from 94 being the oldest and some youngest in their early 20s, from various schools of Goa. It was very interesting, enriching and unique experience of collecting the data and putting them down. The ex-principal, Dr. Rita Pais says, the college never thought about keeping a record of all their activities in an order and it would be nice to keep all these in record. The questionnaire was sent through Google form through the heads of the schools, friends, teachers and a retired ADEI (Assistant District Educational Inspector) to circulate the same to as many teachers as possible. Most of the teachers were busy in the year ending works, recorded as accurately as possible.

FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nirmala Institute of Education, Altinho, Panaji, Goa, has rendered yeoman services to the state of Goa down the ages. This institution had its humble beginning at a time when Goa was in great need of the same. It did not just prepare a set of teachers for the purpose of teaching students in the secondary or higher secondary level but even to reach out to the primary and pre-primary teachers by providing them the best training and skill based learning. It also spared no opportunity to provide timely help and support in training teachers for the special school, which otherwise was available only in Mumbai the closest. The preparation of councilors for schools is another noteworthy service of this magnificent institute.

It would be highly appreciated if this institute could restart the special teachers training program fulfilling the requirements as it is a pressing need of the time. There are a variety of such services required in areas of academic disability or physical disability. In the rising world of competitions coupled with the availability of diverse distractions such as media, drug and sex, the newer generation need a lot of counseling and directions. The rising number with issues related to single child, single parent is also alarming.

The teachers and teacher educators are challenged to equip themselves with life managing skills and not just the transfer of knowledge. Knowledge is available easily in various forms through different means but to differentiate the good from the bad; the right from the wrong and the quality and quantity of the same is the challenge of today. We face a world that looks around for proper guidance and training. Crimes are on the rise, a great number of young lives are lost through accidents and suicides. Thus it is an urgent plea to such institutions to reach out to the unreached with more and more skill based training to touch and manage lives well.

CONCLUSION

The Greek Philosopher, Aristotle said “The best way to teach character is through example.” Humanists assert that every child deserves to be inspired by a passionate, caring, knowledgeable and inspiring teacher who brings the curriculum to life by making it meaningful, enjoyable, relevant and vibrant. This is possible only through the hard work, dedication and commitment of the teacher educators and their educational institutions. Today if Goa can be proud of reaching to 88.70%⁶ of literacy rate and a very low percentage of dropouts (12.1, being the dropout ratio of boys at Class IX and X and girls 5.5)⁷ This is only possible because of the teachers of Goa and the Teacher training institutes. Being part of this alma mater I greatly feel elevated to have the opportunity to put down the experiences of various personalities of this prestigious institute and their unceasing contribution to the promotion of education in Goa. May it continue to enlighten the darkened lives and be a shining light to the world.

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