



On the Centre for Research in P

A Conversation with Professo

MENTOR: Professor Luke, in the area of educational research in Singapore, some of our readers are familiar with the work of NIE's CARE (Centre for Applied Research in Education), which was started at about the time that NIE was formed in 1991. It is now replaced by CRPP. As we in STU understand it, CRPP was established under your leadership with very specific objectives, a little different from CARE's? What are these objectives?

PROFESSOR LUKE: The Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice (CRPP) was set up with a very specific agenda: to develop, research and generate innovation in teaching and learning, pedagogy and practice in Singapore classrooms at all levels. The more subtle medium to long-term goal might be to get the first accurate and comprehensive scientific view of where we've gotten to as a system and to begin laying out directions for the next generation of policy and practice. But the 'no holds barred approach' of CRPP will be to push the horizons of what's possible in actual classroom practices, while identifying, researching and capitalizing on those innovative and cutting-edge practices that Singaporean teachers have already developed.

MENTOR: Figure 1 here is taken from the NIE website, which serves as a broad research agenda. Could you please say a few words about this agenda and how the different components may be conceptually linked?

On 1 March 2003, NIE started a new Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice, with Professor Allan Luke appointed as its Dean, Professor S Gopinathan as the Vice Dean for policy and Professor Peter Freebody as Vice Dean for research methodology. Before taking up the NIE appointment, Professor Luke was Professor of Education and Dean and Head of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Queensland in Australia. In the area of educational administration, Professor Luke was, from 1999 to 2000, Deputy Director General for the Queensland State Education System and Chief Educational Advisor to the Queensland Minister of Education from 1999 until he came over here. As a scholar, Professor Luke's fields of research interests are wide-ranging – they include language and literacy education, curriculum and sociology, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. He is very well published, being the author and editor of 11 books and many articles featured in such prestigious journals in education as the *Harvard Educational Review*, *American Journal of Education*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*.

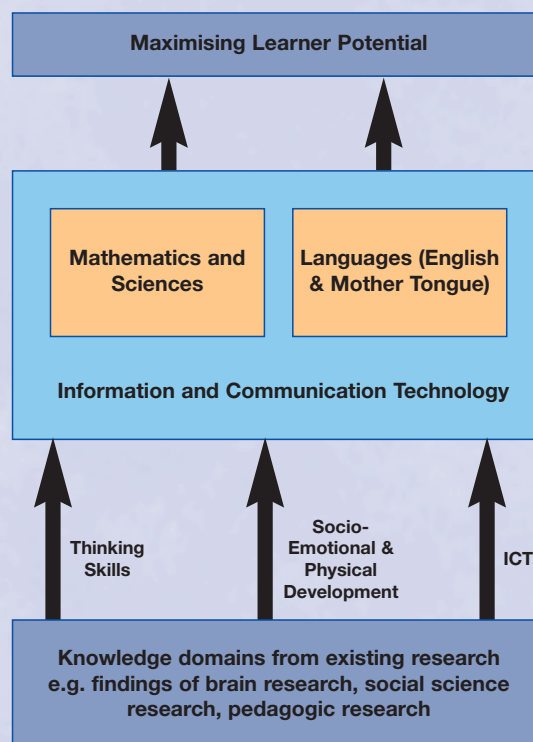


Figure 1. Framework of Research in Core Areas within NIE
(Source: NIE website)

PROFESSOR LUKE: Thanks, MENTOR, but the website you refer to is being redeveloped as we speak - and the relationships between these different areas are shifting as our serious research work and engagement with schools and teachers begins this month. Our key domains are indeed Science and Maths, IT, English and Mother Tongue language and literacy. I wish I could tell you that we had the actual, the philosophic and the practical relationships between our key domains all worked out. But it's a movable feast. The ICT and the language/literacy and the critical thinking

Pedagogy and Practice at NIE:

Professor Allan Luke, Dean of CRPP



issues are clearly 'cross-curricular' matters that we'll study and engage with across the board. And, of course, maths and science education have become, quite justifiably in light of the new economies, national *preoccupations*. But at the same time, we're pushing headlong into other *closely connected and ground-breaking* areas, including social studies, early childhood education, National Education and arts/humanities.

MENTOR: We also note in the NIE website the intention to review the achievements of Phase 1 after four years. Could you tell us briefly what direction that you would like to see the CRPP take in the next three or four years, which, in your view, would at least meet projected outcomes?

PROFESSOR LUKE: Our core research programme will begin in schools later this year. This will be the largest educational research project underway in the world and will put Singapore researchers and teachers 'on the map'. We'll be working alongside teachers at many levels, observing, coding, and getting a comprehensive picture of how kids are moving through the system, where they're struggling, the different kinds and approaches to teaching, and their new life pathways into very risky and tough economies and new globalised cultures. But we can't wait until we've got all the data in and analysed. We're going to begin supporting teachers and researchers who are working with new and innovative approaches during the next term. We'll soon have a range of projects up and running: for example, in teachers' use of IT

networks, in teaching critical literacy and critical thinking in classrooms, on the learning strategies of successful language learners, in improving maths textbooks, to name just a few.

MENTOR: NIE is basically a teaching institution, as it trains novice teachers to teach in our schools. Many of our readers were trained in IE and later NIE. Having done a quick recce of the staffing situation, as you must have, do you think you would have the kind of manpower you would need to do the research work in the CRPP at least in the next few years?

PROFESSOR LUKE: There's tremendous research talent at NIE and across the Singaporean system more generally. We're drawing together a world class team of young Singaporean researchers and

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PhDs, including NIE staff, MOE staff and practising teachers, recent NUS and NTU graduates and researchers, and even researchers who have worked for various other government ministries. No lack of talent or support here - it's a matter of us getting the science and

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