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## Nali-Kali in Primary Schools in Karnataka

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Education is not a pool of stagnant water. It is always flowing. As it flows it carries with it several ideas, techniques and innovations and heads towards universalisation of education.

Among the many experiments to ensure quality education, Nali Kali, or Joyful Learning, is a unique concept that has been put into practice. It is child-centered, activity-based learning that helps children imbibe values apart from acquiring school education. Nali Kali creates the right atmosphere for the child to learn in a friendly and joyful way, at a leisurely pace.

The concept of Nali Kali took birth in a remote hamlet in Heggadadevankote taluk of Mysore district and gradually spread to other areas and as it spread it evolved with new ideas and revisions and has now been implemented in all the government primary schools of Karnataka. Children of Classes 1, 2 and 3 are covered by this method of teaching.

### Highlights of Nali Kali

- Multi level learning
- Quality education
- Self learning
- Learning at own speed
- Joyful learning

### The Nali Kali Classroom

The Nali Kali classroom is unique and is distinct from a normal classroom. Learning materials need to be arranged and kept ready before the class begins.

Learning materials that need to be arranged in the classroom and their brief description:

### 1. Learning Cards

These cards contain small nuggets of learning material. These cards are kept in the Nali Kali classroom and arranged separately according to class, subject and milestones. These learning cards are supplied by the Department of education, Government of Karnataka.

### 2. Progress charts

These charts are also supplied by the department and are displayed according to subject and class. These contain step numbers according to milestones and logos. Each milestone reached marks the level of skill and knowledge acquired by the child. Children have to mark their progress in these charts and the progress chart is the most important document for each child.

### 3. Group discs

These discs contain information about which activity has to be carried out in which group and under whose supervision. There are discs for each of the five groups: for language, mathematics and environmental studies for classes 1, 2 and 3. Each disc represents a group and the group number, name of the supervisor for the group and the logo that represents the activity of that group.

Activities are carried out thus:

- Partial help by the teacher
- Complete help by the teacher
- Complete help by friend
- Partial help by the friend
- Self learning

Those activities that are group activities are not represented by the logos on the Group discs. Each activity has been allotted a logo which is displayed on the left hand corner of the learning material – cards, work book and reader. The same logo is displayed on the progress charts and group discs.

In languages, animals are used as symbols in logos, and in mathematics, birds are used as symbols in logos. In environmental studies insects are used as logos. These logos help the child mark her place in the progress chart easily, pick up the related learning material and take her place in the group.

#### 4. Learning Grid

Strings are fixed four feet below the roof of the classroom from which the products of craft activities done by the children are hung. These help in encouraging creative talent among children.

#### 5. Wall Slate

This is a four feet high blackboard along the four walls of the classroom and a portion of it is allotted to each child and is called Wall Slate. The children use it to do sums or write sentences as a practice exercise.

#### 6. Weather Chart

Here children observe the weather daily in the morning, afternoon and evening and mark the weather type. This will help in preparing the monthly weather chart.

#### 7. Work Books

The government supplies work books subject-wise for each of the classes 1, 2 and 3, as well as readers in languages for each class. These will have been grouped according to subject and class. These will have to be read by the child after learning under each milestone has been achieved, during the self-learning process and during evaluation.

### 8. Teaching Learning Material

Flash cards, dice, beads, pebbles, sticks, puppets, screens, masks needed to conduct activities and material needed for craft activities will have been arranged according to milestone. All these materials have to be within the easy reach of the children.



#### Handling of Classes in Nali Kali

Since classes 1, 2 and 3 are combined for the teaching process, handling of the class is totally different.

In our school there are in all 95 students in Classes 1, 2 and 3. We have split them into three sections of 32 students each. Three of us are handling these sections as Nali Kali teachers. Each period is of 80-minute duration and there are 4 periods daily – the first period is for Kannada, second for Mathematics, the third for Environmental Studies and the fourth for Radio lessons and English.

The day starts with the children sitting in a circle and doing meditation for a while. The next activity is to mark the weather in the chart. And then the following activities begin:

- As per the progress chart, identify the children for group activity - like singing, playing, story-telling, identifying pictures etc. – and engage them in those activities.



- Mark the progress made by the children in the progress chart.
- Ask a student to place the Group Disc on the floor
- Line up the children in order of their class and subject in front of the Progress Chart related to the topic of that period and make them identify their status of learning besides identifying the logo concerning their next activity to be undertaken.



- Collect the learning material as per the entry made in the Progress Chart and make the child sit in the group concerned.
- The teacher now begins the teaching process and guides the self-learning groups first and then sits in the group that is fully dependent on the teacher for learning and handles the children in that group.

Guidance means giving suggestions on who will do what activity and how; who will help whom and how.



- Teachers repeatedly ensure that all children in all groups are engaged in some activity.



- After ensuring the learning and satisfactory completion of the activity, the progress of the child has to be recorded in the progress card and the attention of the child drawn to the activity to be taken up the next day. Where a child has not satisfactorily completed the activity she has to be asked to repeat the activity the next day.
- After the activity, the children will have to put back the learning materials in its respective places.

## My experience

I was part of the team of teachers selected to undergo six-day training in 2009-10 to handle Nali Kali classes. After training, when I started handling classes, I found the going tough but in a span of 2-3 months I started liking it because of the enthusiasm shown by the children, their activities and the progress made by them.

Nali Kali classes are different from other classes and there are similarities in the competencies of the three classes – 1, 2 and 3.

For example, in Class 1, in mathematics, there is counting, writing, addition, and subtraction for numbers from 1 to 19. In Class 2, a similar exercise is done for numbers from 1 to 99, and in Class 3 it is for numbers from 1 to 500.

Here, as there is scope for learning at the child's own speed, a talented child can learn fast and go further. Similarly, some children might start slowly but will pick up speed gradually. I have seen children of varied abilities going up in their learning over the year.

- Since every child participates in every activity, he or she learns by experience. (See and learn; do and understand)
- Unlike normal classes, there is no mass teaching here and each child is attended to during the learning process. I find this very useful to give personal attention to each child. In fact, even the learning deficiency of children who absent themselves can be overcome.
- As I have observed, a bright child guides other children in his/her group and in the process develops leadership qualities and the spirit of cooperation and adjustment.
- Another feature of this process is that a child starts learning with the guidance of a teacher, fortifies it with the cooperation of friends and finally learns to perform activities independently.

- There is healthy competition among the students in the class. It creates an awareness about the pace of learning and encourages them to learn more and instills in them self confidence. Learning then becomes a challenging task for them. Physically challenged students also get motivated to learn in this process.

## Challenges of the Nali Kali system

- Despite all the aforesaid positives/strengths of the Nali Kali method, teachers handling these classes have to face many challenges.
- It is difficult to handle a class if there are more than 30 students.
- Since the teachers have to be present in the class throughout the duration of each day's sessions it is taxing both mentally and physically.
- Teachers can find it difficult to handle a class where the students of all the three classes are in the learning group and several learning points have to be taught for each class of students
- There are similarities in the competencies of Classes 1 and 2, but for Class 3 the level of teaching is higher and therefore it is better to separate Class 3 for teaching.

## Conclusion

True, there are challenges in this system but compared to all other schemes implemented by the department of education, Nali Kali appears to be the most effective in ensuring quality education. The cards, charts, workbooks, readers, and discs are extremely effective in teaching and several teachers, education experts and officials have striven to prepare them. These are being constantly revised and information about the revision is being given to the teachers in Tele-mode. Also, problems being encountered by the teachers while handling classes are also being looked into and solutions developed.

Even for a child who does not complete all the milestones in an academic year, this system permits her to complete the pending milestones in the beginning of the next academic year and then start learning the milestones of the next year.

The evaluation process is continuous. A child is evaluated at the end of each milestone through plays,

activities and oral answers to the questions in the cards. The children are free from the fear of a formal examination and can evolve their personality in a learning atmosphere that is free and friendly.

I have derived more satisfaction in teaching students through this method compared to any other method.



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