

‘Nali-Kali’ — Joyful Learning Programme of Karnataka

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Early literacy has an important role to play in the early learning experiences of children and to boost their school achievement. Some state governments in India have been implementing various pedagogical approaches, learning programmes, teaching-learning materials, etc., to facilitate sustainable learning of children at the early primary stage. For, in this stage, children need a variety of practices for learning in a stress-free environment. To address such issues, Government of Karnataka started the ‘Nali-Kali’ Programme as activity-based learning for children at the early stage of primary level in all government schools.

The ‘Nali-Kali’ Programme was started in 1995, as a small UNICEF-assisted pilot project in H.D. Kote, Mysore district of Karnataka. ‘Nali-Kali’ is a Kannada phrase, which means ‘learning in a playful or joyful manner’. It began as a teaching-learning method in primary schools

to provide enjoyable and stress-free learning for children. The state government found this methodology quite appropriate in multi-levels multi-grade schools. It was introduced in 13,691 government schools of Karnataka where the number of children was less than 30 at lower primary level under *Sarva Shikha Abhiyan* in the year 2008–09. In 2009–10, the ‘Nali-Kali’ method was introduced in all government Kannada medium schools of Karnataka in Classes I and II which was later extended up to Class III in 2010–11.

Principles of ‘Nali-Kali’

- Multi-grade teaching, multi-level learning in a classroom.
- Accommodates various learning styles.
- Activity-based, interactive, cooperative, at times with competitive spirit.
- Learning through multiple sensory stimulation, play way, peer guidance, self-evaluation.

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‘Nali-Kali’ Process

The ‘Nali-Kali’ encompasses a method of teaching-learning in a situation where multi-grade, multi-level and self-pace of learning is highly regarded. The curriculum is divided into small manageable sequential learning units called ‘Milestones’ or ‘phases’ for each subject (Language, Mathematics, Environmental Science).

In order to attain mastery over each milestone, children have to go through several learning activities. These are called ‘learning steps’. Initially the children are placed in a group by the teachers based on their learning levels and abilities. They can step forward to learn the content at their own pace through different learning activities. A variety of learning activities are included to support the mental and physical development of children (such as cards with fun reading, songs and roleplaying scenarios). As soon as children realise that they have mastered the content, they themselves inform the teacher for their assessment. After assessment, the teacher permits them to do the next and more challenging activity related to another content of ‘learning ladder’. Later, when the child learns or successfully completes the task, it is reported to the teacher and child himself enters it in his/her progress chart under the guidance of the teacher. In this way, children move from simple to complex concepts gradually. They master the competency in one group and move on to another group to learn the next competency. Thus, children learn at their own

pace. Moving from one competency to another is not dependent on the whole group’s learning. The groups are dynamic and the formation of each group changes, depending on the activity that the child is doing. The child is free to move at his/her pace of learning. The learning ladder on which the child ‘climbs’ shows the progress of the child.

All these teaching-learning activities of Nali-Kali are conducted in steps called learning cycle. It has six steps: (i) Pre-preparatory activities; (ii) Preparatory activities; (iii) Competency preparatory activities; (iv) Learning activities; (v) Practice activities; (vi) Evaluation activities.

A variety of materials are also provided for each step (for example, materials for Grade 2 include a set of 50 reading books with two increasing difficulty levels). The non-scholastic components such as Arts (Music, Dance, Role play, Drawing) work experience, life-skills education have been integrated and no separate periods allotted for these activities. Students participate actively throughout the learning process.

‘Nali-Kali’ Classroom

The ‘Nali-Kali’ classroom is very different from the conventional classroom. For making the classroom suitable for ‘Nali-Kali’ method, children’s work, children’s blackboard, weather charts, etc., developed by students and teachers are displayed. The seating arrangements for children is unusual too. The students belonging to different standards sit in a group,

as per their learning level in a circle called learning circles or plates. There are five groups: (a) Fully supported by the teacher; (b), Partially supported by the teacher; (c) Fully supported by the peers; (d) Partially supported by the peers; and lastly (e) the Evaluation group (self-learning group). The child can pick up his/her card and sit in the appropriate learning circle.

Activity Cards

All the 'Nali-Kali' schools have been supplied with a set of 'Nali-Kali' cards and supporting materials such as learning ladder, learning circles, progress charts, climate chart and 'Nali-Kali' kit. In place of textbooks, Workbook for each subject is provided and the activities of these workbooks are integrated in the learning steps. The activity cards are textual materials to facilitate readiness for learning, instruction, reinforcement and evaluation. These activity cards contain songs, games, outdoor activities, conversation, role play, puzzles and crafts. They indicate the mastery of the child over a particular skill or competency.

Teachers' Role

Teachers are expected to focus much of their effort on supporting lower level students. With the class size limited to 30 students and one teacher per class, and students in Grades 1–3 divided evenly between participating classrooms, each class has a mix of grade levels. Thus, a more democratic classroom management system, which is not based on the child's gender, caste, age or ability, but on the nature

of activity taken up by the child, was evolved. Teachers receive training in the 'Nali-Kali' instructional methods through a network of 'master trainers' at the state, district and block levels, who train teachers at the next level below. Teachers participate in multiple trainings per year and in monthly meetings to discuss issues that arise.

Evaluation System

In 'Nali-Kali' programme, a non-threatening, continuous and comprehensive evaluation was build into the learning ladder. Each class consists of a preparatory activity (e.g., a song or dance), followed by instruction in groups, and followed by an evaluation period to wrap up. Students are actively involved in the process by charting their progress through the different steps of the ladder. Instead of traditional assessments, tests given to each student as they advance up the ladder are used to evaluate student performance and progress.

Conclusion

The 'Nali-Kali' programme has been around for two decades now, and has continued to receive positive response from stakeholders throughout the period. The system has been strengthened, so that teachers are trained with clock-like regularity. The state government has plans to elaborate the programme.