

## Information Dissemination and Staff Development Programme

by Nantha Gohwong

The recent development of English Language into EST/ESP/EAP brings out another urgent issue---the need to train English teachers to be competent and confident enough to cope with the many requirements derived from the nature of the work. Formal pre-service training is provided by educational and teachers training programs. Once these graduates are involved in their routine teaching roles, they tend to be too absorbed and lose contact with the new development in the field due to various reasons, in spite of their necessity to obtain new information.

*How can individual teachers help make small contributions with a minimum effort and a maximum benefit ?*

Every year a lot of money is spent on providing scholarships and funds for in-service training, both abroad and locally. One way to increase benefit from this spending is to encourage trainees to pass on their training experiences and knowledge to their colleagues---not only in the form of written reports but as talks, lectures, or discussions.

*How can it be guaranteed that these trainees are sophisticated enough to convey proper interpretations of the principles or concepts ?*

There is no guarantee. And that is exactly why direct meetings are very significant in information dissemination. They allow participants to ask questions for further clarification of the concepts, for exemplification, etc. Discussions bring up agreements and disagreements which may in turn lead to new ideas or new interpretations; thus stimulate friendly academic atmosphere. However, discussions---agreements and disagreements are most advantageous when participants do not feel resentful against disagreements, sharing the sense of tolerance and appreciate the value of constructive comments or critiques.

Some teachers may not feel confident enough to take the role of a “conveyor” to pass on the information, considering the fact that they themselves were just told and have not had enough time to digest the concepts nor to put them into practice. Friends and colleagues can assist by encouraging them to realize that it is the dissemination of information that is the issue, it does not imply that the conveyors are expected to be experts nor disciples of those concepts.

One usual complaint when the conveyors are junior members is that they might be accused of performing a "show off" case and consequently condemned by colleagues and superiors, especially those of more seniority. Such attitude must be entirely eliminated for the sake of future academic developments. It requires both the senior members and the junior members to recognize their advantages and disadvantages. Senior members, being earlier graduates, are usually further removed from current academic developments, but they have more experience in terms of application and administration. Junior members, being later graduates may be more familiar with later or current issues in the academic developments, but have less experience in other aspects. Therefore, it should be obvious why the two groups should share their advantages and work as a team.

Problems usually occur when people are dubious whether or not new information or new concepts are compatible or applicable to local situations. This is precisely where live discussions are useful to define the compatibility or applicability of the new concepts.

It must be emphasized here that it is in this area of local familiarity that local teachers can provide useful information to non-local or foreign advisors whose lack of such awareness may cause inefficiency to the whole program.

*How necessary is this staff development program? Should those who already are "good" teachers attend activities in the staff development program?*

No one can give definite answers to these questions. A "good" teacher should realize by himself (or herself) what criteria are used to classify oneself as such.

*Are his teaching materials interesting and motivating to students? Does his teaching enable students to achieve their goals in learning  $L_2$  (cf Gohwong, N. 1981. 'Why An EST Programme' in KMIT'S EST BULLETIN, No. 1)? Are his teaching techniques or strategies perfect? (!), etc.*

One important fact of the contemporary world should be borne in mind, that modern societies have become gradually and increasingly scientific/technological oriented, with newly developed equipment and processes occupying essential roles in daily life. Teaching/learning activities, being a part of the society's formal education cannot ignore this fact, and must incorporate it in such a way that will equip learners with needed abilities and awareness.

Another implication concerned here is that scientific/technological society always evaluates objectively, and continuously attempts to develop or improve itself in every possible aspect. Any part of the societal activities failing to achieve this goal is subjected to severe criticism and thus discouraged.

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