

He argued forcefully that the expansion of higher education had gone beyond the point at which we should tolerate the continued production of nongraduate teachers.

Professor Cooke, in his paper 'Recent Trends in Teacher Education: An Approach to Quality', reached a similar conclusion, stating that in order to assure that students reached a level which was regarded as competent, a first degree was essential and should be seen as the benchmark of intellectual fitness. To leave the HKIEd outside the University and Polytechnics Grants Committee (UPGC) system would be to leave the teacher education institutions outside of the higher education system. This would foster insularity and parochialism. It would impinge on the nature of the courses and result in low staff morale and self-esteem. He warned against the notion that teacher education is an inferior academic activity, separate from the tertiary mainstream. This could lead to a form of academic apartheid.

If the Provisional Governing Council (PGC) of the HKIEd implemented this sort of post-secondary but not quite tertiary institution, it would be only incrementally different from the present Colleges.

However, Dr. Woodhouse, in his paper 'The Accreditation Process', saw nothing anomalous about a 'teacher training university' offering sub-degree courses. He pointed out that the polytechnics in Hong Kong are high level institutions offering degree and sub-degree courses, and that this situation may be permanent. The HKCAA requires a degree awarding institution to be a coherent academic community that understands the characteristics of the awards it offers and has the management structures necessary for planning new courses and for assuring their quality.

The Upgrading Process

Mr. Lawrence Chu gave a very illuminating description of the upgrading process at Baptist College in his paper 'The Upgrading Process'. He illustrated vividly the requirement for the type of coherent academic community required by the HKCAA. From the point at which a course is proposed, through its long journeys through departmental team meetings, faculty scrutiny, academic boards and back again, proposals are examined to see how their structures overlap other courses, how they will be supervised, resourced, supported and finally taught.

Implicit in Mr. Chu's remarks, if we are to apply them to the proposed HKIEd is that the planning, supervision and support required to offer and run degree courses presupposes the existence, or development, of a coherent institutional structure and organisation. It would be a mistake to suppose one can simply disestablish the existing Colleges, improve their premises and their resources and create degree courses. This would not create the type of academic community that is needed to support a degree programme credible enough to attract and satisfy the type of student teachers Hong Kong's school system requires; nor would it win accreditation.

Implications for the Colleges

ECR5 has set out the key stages of the upgrading process and recommends that it be done without delay. With the setting up of the PGC, the first step has been taken. The eventual outcome of this process will probably be determined by the ability of the Colleges and the future HKIEd to develop appropriate courses and meet the accreditation requirements.

For this reason we must start to examine the implications of the accreditation process outlined by Dr. Woodhouse and described by Mr. Lawrence Chu.

The Colleges should now start looking seriously at their courses with a view to upgrading them.

Sub-Degree Courses

If, according to Professor Cooke and Dr. Cheng, the HKIEd should move towards making the requirement of a first degree a prerequisite for entry to teacher training, there is no possible justification for continuing to run non-validated pre-service education courses which do not offer credits towards the acquisition of a higher professional qualification. There is no prospect of attracting quality students in any numbers while such courses are offered, and to offer such limited courses is a serious disservice to our students. However, ECR5 does not deal directly with this issue; instead it gives priority to in-service professional qualifications by recommending the Advanced Teacher Certificate (ATC).

There can be no doubt but that the ATC should be developed as soon as possible, but not at the expense of a formal pre-service qualification. Though the issue was not explicitly discussed by the speakers, the implication is surely that priority be given to developing a comprehensive teaching diploma to be offered at pre-service level, components of which will also be offered as part of an in-service qualification. The components of this diploma should be designed in such a way that they can be qualitatively and quantitatively up-graded and used as credits for a degree course for primary and secondary teachers. Great priority should be given to replacing non-validated certificate courses as soon as possible. In designing these courses, and subsequently upgrading them, course designers should bear in mind Dr. Woodhouse's warning that upgrading a course does not simply mean adding elements to the end of it, but redesigning it throughout so each element is qualitatively enhanced.

The prime responsibility of the HKIEd is to ensure that the young people who enter it are properly equipped to teach the children of Hong Kong. The most significant group of its students will be studying on pre-service courses. At present the prospect of being a Certificated Master or Mistress is not attractive. The certificate courses are not adequate and they need to be upgraded. It would be a great shame if the prestige gained by offering degree courses deflects resources and planning from upgrading this area in

favour of degree courses which serve sectional interests rather than the majority of trainee students. Degree courses must be offered as soon as possible, but not at the expense of an adequate training for the majority of pre-service students.

Also, the rush for government funds by various groups who wish to be involved in degree courses could mean the staff of the Colleges are bypassed in planning the upgraded courses. This would mean that the valuable experience they have in pre-service education as a whole would be lost to course planners, and the valuable experience to be gained by being involved in this process would be lost to the very people who are most closely associated with teacher training in Hong Kong.

ECR5 spells out reasons why a post-S7 entry will not be attainable for some years. This being the case, the three-year pre-service course will require additional subject components designed for students who have not completed 'A' Level study in their elective subject or who are following a subject not offered at 'A' Level. This is another area course designers in the Colleges could start preparatory work on right away.

A Language Education Component

In this context it is worth looking at the future of language training in the HKIEd. At present all pre-service students follow a general English Language Skills course. Students follow the same course regardless of the requirements of Chinese or English medium schools. To reflect the reality of the changing language needs in Hong Kong, future courses run by the HKIEd should offer an English teaching medium component for those students who wish to teach in English medium schools. Proficiency in this area would be reflected in the title of the qualification, e.g. 'Advanced Teachers' Certificate (English)'.

ECR5 is quite specific in calling for a degree in Primary education to be set up as soon as possible. However, if the Colleges offer non-validated certificate courses and degrees in primary education at the same time, the certificate courses will be deprived of the stronger candidates, further reducing the desirability of the qualification. It also means that secondary schools will have to rely on the less academic teachers to fill positions. New teachers will continue to be qualified to teach a subject to S3 students that they themselves have studied only to S5 level.

Again we consider Dr. Woodhouse's advice to allow developments to take place on a number of fronts simultaneously. Parts of the courses are common to both levels and could be taken in common. It would, then, seem sensible to set up:

- * a team to propose the core content for the degree;
- * teams to propose specific primary and secondary components;
- * teams working in each subject area.

Future upgrading would then take place in three stages:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Phase One | Upgrading all existing full-time and part-time courses to an ATC or Teaching Diploma. (The withdrawal of certificated master and mistress qualifications would make the use of the term 'advanced certificate' redundant.)
Simultaneous introduction of degree courses involving consortium partnership between the HKIEd, universities, polytechnics and the OLI. |
| Phase Two | Upgrading the validated ATC course to degree level (primary and secondary education). |
| Phase Three | Withdrawal of non-degree courses and the introduction of postgraduate courses as the HKIEd becomes a fully degree-awarding body. |

Academic and Administrative Structures

It is obvious from the description of the requirements for an institutional review mapped out by Dr. Woodhouse and the description of the upgrading process outlined by Mr. Lawrence Chu that the Colleges need to review their academic and administrative structures as well as look carefully at their resources. Though the exact nature of these structures are properly proposed by the PGC and the new Director of the HKIEd, the college authorities, in conjunction with the Department of Education, can surely do preliminary planning in broad outline in a number of areas, especially in assuring that staff are trained in areas of course design and quality maintenance, so that, when the need arises, staff will be in place to facilitate structural developments and propose and supervise new courses. From the description of the institutional review and drawing on the experiences outlined by Mr. Chu the following need to be developed:

1. means by which the staff and students can contribute to formation of academic policy.
2. means by which the staff and students can influence the priorities between various college activities.
3. means by which the staff can make a full contribution to the design and development of new courses.
4. means by which outside bodies and consultants influence developments.
5. means to improve the quality of teaching staff and opportunities for staff development.

The scattered nature of the Colleges and the ILE will mean:

6. special liaison committees to coordinate and prevent duplication.

Quality Assurance and Assessment

Central to the issue of outside validation is the question of maintenance of the quality of the courses. Serious consideration will have to be given to:

1. the monitoring of courses and the quality assurance mechanisms.
2. the setting up of internal validation panels.

3. creating a senior academic committee to monitor and control the quality of the programmes.
4. how students are assessed, and by what criteria.

This having been said, a major consideration in quality control mechanisms is the schools' requirement for a given number of newly trained teachers every year. While the Colleges are part of the government policy implementation system there has been a tendency to sacrifice quality for quantity. Lecturing staff have frequently been frustrated in their attempts to maintain the quality of the student body by the Colleges' requirement to ensure the production of as many trained teachers as possible. The transfer of this policy to the HKIEd will mean that the development of quality control mechanisms will be frustrated.

Management Culture

Professor Lee Ngok in his paper, 'Developments in Adult Education: Some Lessons from Recent History', outlined two possible management styles: the centralised top-down civil service model, and the collegiality of established universities. The former obtains in the Colleges at present, the latter would probably take years to inculcate. However, the implementation of the academic structures and the development of new courses outlined by Mr. Chu will almost certainly require a new management approach. Many of the problems associated with the Colleges are the direct result of a top-down approach. As Dr. Cheng pointed out, civil service branches are designed to implement policy, not formulate it. He pointed out that the spirit of the School Management Initiative (SMI) is to generate a sense of mission from within. These principles need to be absorbed by the Colleges. As he saw it, the Colleges have been adversely affected by frequent changes of leadership, the fluid deployment of personnel, the piecemeal assignment of tasks and restricted deployment of resources.

It is obvious from the required characteristics of an accredited institution that such a management style has to change. The Colleges have evolved in the civil service, and have developed inflexible administrative systems. The transformation to an accredited tertiary institution will require a system of quality planning and quality control. Processes of consultation are required in the planning of courses. New courses have to be planned at departmental level and referred upwards. A successful course can hardly be designed if the concept originates at the administrative level, where it is broken down piecemeal and allocated to different members of staff who are not always aware of the total picture. This, however, frequently characterizes civil service procedures.

Also implicit in the remarks on course design and validation is the inevitability of the demise of the 'work load' ethos which at present pervades the Colleges. The emphasis on distribution of time, rather than on team planning and overall responsibility militates against quality planning. It results in fragmentation and duplication and the neglect of students needs, rather than in integration and quality. It can also result in the failure to utilize

staff strengths and specialisation. Thus innovation is difficult to achieve since what is done and by whom is based on time distribution rather than on professional skills and interests.

Though not discussed directly during the seminar, but related to the above points, is the fact that senior and experienced members of the Colleges have felt constrained by civil service discipline from directly discussing matters of a political or administrative nature. A glance through the submissions to ECR5 indicates that that body was denied a source of considerable expertise in its deliberations. It is to be hoped that the PGC will not similarly be denied, and that a spirit of academic openness and freedom will develop at all staff levels in the HKIEd.

Learning Environment and Resources

Facilities for students' studies need to be examined seriously. A complete up-grading of the library and borrowing facilities are required regardless of any institutional review. Steps should be taken to improve portable library resources, particularly books and a computerised lending system.

One of the major considerations the PGC has to face is the question of accommodation. Professor Lee Ngok pointed out that to have three locations was the most frequently mentioned option, and ECR5 proposed 'no more than three'. The question of sufficient 'critical mass' to stimulate academic excellence is crucial for a credible upgrading process. However attractive the idea of one spacious, custom-built complex may be, it needs to be borne in mind that, unlike other tertiary institutions where a remote location may be attractive, the trend in teacher training is for greater partnership between teacher training and the schools. If the site or sites are remote, the development of the role of teacher trainers as collaborators in school-based work with their students will be hampered.

However, as Dr. Cheng pointed out, while we in the Colleges and the ILE may feel that the expectations for the HKIEd as spelt out by ECR5 are limited, we should as professionals be able to reach beyond these expectations. The Government probably wants to avoid a crisis of redundancies. Also, the suspicion is that it does not want to bear the price of another UPGC funded tertiary institution awarding degrees. The HKIEd may suffer as a consequence of this, and with it, education in Hong Kong, but if we in the Colleges and the ILE seek the support of other educationalists, we may be able to push the HKIEd further than the Government intends it to go. If we do we will certainly be doing the schools of Hong Kong a favour.

Note

The views in this article are those of the author only.

Reference

Education Commission. 1992. *Report No 5: The Teaching Profession*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION: ITS LIMITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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The success of school education relies on two most important factors: (1) the recruitment of people of good, if not the best, quality into the teaching profession; and (2) a positive and encouraging system, or school culture, to motivate them to work for the best.

The Education Commission in its fifth report (ECR5, 1992) aims to enhance our teachers' quality by merging the current five government teacher training institutions into one new Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd). It also endorses the School Management Initiative as a means of improving a comparatively straggly school management system. Both issues are important and the recommendations were widely welcomed and supported by the public.

However, the Commission's HKIEd proposal is obviously a late one and a compromise. It is far from satisfactory and can only solve part of our existing problem. One crucial factor is the government's policy of upholding a stratified graduate teacher system, in which HKIEd graduates will be considered inferior to those holding degrees from other tertiary institutions.

Our existing problem is a two-fold one. Firstly, Colleges of Education find it increasingly difficult to attract outstanding secondary school graduates to enrol. These colleges supply nearly all primary school teachers and one third of the secondary teachers, but offer no degree. In 1989, after the Tiananmen Massacre, the Governor announced a rapid expansion of first degree places in order to boost public confidence. It might not have been realised that the Colleges had been put in an even more difficult situation.

The logical solution to the problem would have been to upgrade the Colleges to degree-awarding status. Yet the Education Commission soon realised it was extremely difficult. A significant portion of the current College teaching staff did not even have a first degree, not to mention a higher degree which is normally required in a tertiary institution; and the government had never planned to upgrade their qualifications before. The resulting proposal is for a prolonged period of up to 15 years in which a mere 35% of primary teaching posts (some 7,500) will become graduate posts. In the meantime, the HKIEd would continue to offer some of its non-degree programmes, which are already unattractive now.

Of course, 'better late than never'. But even the degrees awarded by the HKIEd would not be that attractive. According to the Commission's report, the HKIEd degree will be confined only to primary education. Moreover, the salary scale of the graduate primary school teachers will be lower than for their counterparts in secondary school. In this case, if an outstanding S5 or

S6 student is given a chance to choose between HKIEd and other tertiary institutions, which will he/she likely choose? Would he/she abandon the more flexible career path and the more promising future in terms of salary? The answer is simply, no – except for the few who are truly determined, when they are sixteen or eighteen years old, to become primary school teachers. So it would be realistic to ask for a more flexible career path for the HKIEd students, both for the sakes of the students and for the Institute itself.

Another problem relates to the curriculum, the teaching and learning environment, and so forth, which is now in the hands of the Provisional Governing Council (PGC) of the HKIEd. These are complicated issues that require adequate resources, enthusiastic teaching staff and precise planning. I just want to make a point here in regard to the curriculum.

Some feel that the current approach to teaching and the curriculum in the Colleges of Education tends to be rigid, conservative and weak in academic discipline. I am quite confident that once the HKIEd is set up, with better-equipped teaching staff, this will be altered in one way or another. But how should the curriculum be altered? I would suggest a broad curriculum be introduced to enable the student teachers to tackle the various problems that may arise in their future occupation. As a teacher training institution, the HKIEd differs from a university where students from a wide range of academic disciplines have many chances to meet and exchange ideas on campus. Such informal interaction helps a lot in enriching one's knowledge and widening one's perspectives. It is critically important in a world of frequent change to help the young people to grow up to live in such a world. It is also desirable to have teachers in a school with a variety of experience and perspectives. Although the HKIEd will have its limitations, a broad curriculum will surely help.

To solve the above problem, a different proposal would be to lift the monopoly of the HKIEd on the future primary school teacher market. If our ultimate goal is to guarantee the best obtainable teachers for our primary schools, why don't we explore potential candidates from other tertiary institutions? There must be a considerable number of graduates who wish to become primary school teachers after they have finished their post-secondary study. It would be reasonable to let them join after they have acquired a specified teacher training qualification, just as is happening now in secondary schools. They, along with the HKIEd graduates, will cooperate and make our primary schools more open, pluralistic and full of stimulation. As the tertiary sector expands, the number of such potential candidates will also increase. There is no sound reason why we should exclude them from a needy profession.

August 1993

THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION: SOME ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS

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As I write, an advertisement placed by the Provisional Governing Council of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) for the post of Director has just appeared. It states that the Institute will be autonomous, it will (in due course) have a new campus, it will offer teacher education programmes at pre-degree level, and it will introduce degree and research programmes as soon as possible. This is encouraging.

Education is clearly of very great importance to Hong Kong. In order to provide the high quality education system needed as it moves into the next century, there must be a corresponding provision of high quality education for teachers, both pre-service and in-service. While one could disagree with various recommendations in ECR5, now that the new direction has been set, the concern is what the HKIEd should be doing and how it should be doing it. Issues which seem to me of particular importance are the introduction of degree courses, staff development, research, collaboration with other tertiary institutions, language policy and quality assurance.

It is very pleasing that degree level work is to be introduced as soon as possible. ECR5 recognizes the need for this at both pre-service and in-service levels to ensure the appropriate quality of teacher preparation and development and to attract good students in an increasingly competitive market. It is especially needed to equip teachers adequately for the task of providing language education in Chinese or English and indeed this area has been identified in ECR5 (p. 75) as one where the HKIEd could quickly develop degree courses. It must be a high priority for the Institute. Further, in my view there should be as many places in degree courses as possible for both primary and secondary teachers. ECR5 (p. 66 ff) mentions the various constraints, such as the availability of sufficient S7 leavers, the existing staffing profile, and resource requirements, which have led them to place limits. These constraints are no doubt real but every effort should be made to ensure that the number of degree places is as high as possible. This will require the formulation of a bold plan implemented with determination.

In the context of setting up a new institution and moving to degree level teaching, staff development will be very important, yet it can too easily be neglected in the busy early stages of establishing a tertiary institution. While there must be provision for the development of all staff, both academic and non-academic, special attention should be paid to the need for teaching staff to obtain higher degrees by coursework or research, in Hong Kong or overseas.

The Provisional Governing Council has specifically mentioned the setting up of research programmes as soon as possible. This is for me an essential feature of a tertiary institution devoted to education, but there may be a tendency to reduce its priority in the face of, for example, teaching workload or budget pressures. However, there must be no weakening of resolve on this point. Funds, time, and opportunities to gain experience must be made available. Even more important is the deliberate fostering of a research culture in which research is wholeheartedly supported and recognized.

Although the HKIEd will be a large institution with a major role in its discipline, it will be somewhat narrow in focus and much could be gained through links or collaboration with other institutions. This applies to courses, staff development and research. The possibility of joint courses, especially in-service ones, is referred to in ECR5 (pp. 75-77) and should be actively pursued. There may be areas in its pre-service courses where it is not feasible for the HKIEd to have expertise in depth and it would be sensible to cooperate with other institutions. However, it must be admitted that for some reason tertiary institutions do not seem to find cooperation easy in undergraduate courses. In the area of higher degrees there is also scope for cooperation, clearly in the language area. This might be in teaching parts of courses and could well be in the associate supervision of HKIEd staff registered as research degree students at other institutions, as HKIEd can be expected to have an increasing number of staff eligible to carry out such supervision. Research in education is being carried on at other institutions and collaborative projects, which are generally looked on favourably these days, should be set up. In languages, relevant research is already being carried out in most University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC) institutions.

The HKIEd should take up the recommendation in ECR5 (p. 74) to formulate a suitable language policy on its medium of instruction as a matter of priority. If it is to go beyond broad generalizations, this is not a simple task and it will require sensitivity to the language situation in the community as a whole and to the developments within the education system in particular. If done well, it could provide a lead for others to follow.

A somewhat different but nevertheless important point is that the HKIEd is being set up at a time when quality assurance must be taken into account. Existing UPGC institutions are currently going through the sometimes painful exercise of adjusting to its introduction. While the HKIEd is being formed from existing Colleges of Education and the ILE, it will still be something new and this provides an opportunity for a good start in the area of quality assurance. Interestingly, the ILE made quality in language teaching and language learning the theme of its 1991 conference. While the majority of papers did not address the theme in terms related to quality assurance, some did¹. This should be followed up and built on in the years ahead. Indeed, a high quality institution, especially in the preparation of

teachers in the field of language education, is what members of the profession want and is what Hong Kong needs.

July, 1993

Note

1. See, for example, the following papers in Bird, N. and J. Harris (eds), 1992, *Quilt and Quill: Achieving and Maintaining Quality in Language Teaching and Learning*. Hong Kong: Institute of Language in Education:
Reeves, N. 'Critical Issues in Achieving Quality in Language Learning and Teaching: The Application of Total Quality Management Principles to Curriculum Planning and Design', pp 2-25;
Chappell, E. 'Quality: A Concept to Ground Language Teaching Programs', pp 26-32; and
Littlewood, W. 'Towards the Development of Internal Criteria for Judging Quality', pp 33-43.

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THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND CHINA'S REFORM PROGRAMME

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The establishment of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) will provide the territory with a specialist tertiary teacher education institution. Whilst the focus of attention has rightly been directed towards the contribution that the HKIEd will make to local education, the institute's upgraded status will also create opportunities for it to interact on a regional or international scale.

Some transferable international projects are already in place, including the annual ILE conference, and the various educational programmes that enable local teachers and student-teachers to attend courses in the United Kingdom.

Should the HKIEd seek to expand its horizons by developing worthwhile academic links and collaboration on teacher education programmes, it need look no further than China.

Since 1978, Dengist educational reforms have had a dramatic effect on teacher education in China. The reforms have concentrated on three pedagogical issues in particular: curricular reform, methodological innovation and knowledge transfer. At the same time, the government is seeking to implement the long-cherished political goal of the Nine-Year Basic Education Policy.

Curricular reform has sought to expunge the overtly political agenda of the Maoist Cultural Revolutionary syllabuses of the early seventies. In their place, the revised syllabuses stress academic excellence in support of the nation's economic modernisation programme.

Methodological innovation has focused upon developing alternative, reconstructionist pedagogical strategies to complement or replace the Neo-Confucian direct transmission approach. Previously, teacher education, for those (excluding many primary teachers) who received it, consisted almost exclusively of enhancement of subject knowledge.

The third strand of Dengist reforms is the willingness to import expertise from overseas, through training programmes, academic exchanges and visiting scholars, as well as collaborative broadcasting and publishing ventures.

The Nine-Year Basic Education Policy aims at providing schooling to Secondary 3 level for all citizens. The policy is being phased in gradually: the affluent seaboard area first, then the central industrialised urban regions, and finally the rural and less-developed provinces (where compulsory primary

schooling is the initial target). One unfortunate result of the policy has been to counteract the development of teacher education reforms: large cohorts of teachers are being trained in great haste, and untrained teachers recruited, to meet the demand caused by the expansion at primary and junior secondary levels.

There is potential for the HKIEd to be involved in all three areas of pedagogical reform in the future. Like the Mainland, Hong Kong has accumulated a wealth of experience in the field of curricular reform, though in very different manifestations. A future conference could be devoted to comparing and contrasting experiences in the two places.

Teacher education offers great scope for collaboration and mutual benefit. Exchange programmes could be established at teacher educator, primary school and pre-service teacher levels. After 1997, the HKIEd could supplement Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou Normal Universities and similar key institutions as centres for advanced courses for teacher educators. Fellowships could be awarded to allow Teaching Researchers (officials in charge of in-service training) and primary school teachers to study at the HKIEd. Lecturers from the HKIEd could make brief tours to various regions of China to conduct summer courses for primary teachers and student teachers.

China has satellite television channels dedicated to general education and teacher education to which Hong Kong might gain access. Like Hong Kong, China has a fledgling system of local resource centres for teachers and of in-service correspondence courses in teacher education.

As far as overseas expertise is concerned, the guiding principle for the Chinese government is the same as two hundred years ago: *zhongti xiyong* (Chinese essence, Western practice). In other words, Western experience has to be filtered and adapted to suit Chinese characteristics. Hong Kong's experience of educational synthesis between East and West could make the HKIEd into an important asset to China (a fact that might be stressed should Chinese officials express concern at the expense of implementing Education Commission Report No 5).

The notion of the current Colleges of Education and the ILE playing a significant regional role is plainly fanciful, given their present resources and dispositions. The Hong Kong Institute of Education, on the other hand, will enjoy tertiary status. If it is to operate effectively as a tertiary institution, with all the concomitant implications for teaching quality, research and international academic links, it must be accorded the appropriate facilities, staffing and resources. Should this not be the case, a wealth of opportunities will be lost, to the detriment of Hong Kong and, after 1997, of China.

July, 1993

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT

LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT THROUGH EXPOSURE TO AUTHENTIC AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

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Introduction

We believe that authentic audio/visual materials are a valuable and effective resource for teaching and learning. Students should be motivated to gain exposure to these materials outside the classroom.

Our hypotheses for the Action Research project were:

1. Once students are motivated and encouraged, they will develop the habit of getting exposure to English, such as in watching English TV programmes.
2. The more students are exposed to authentic English materials, the more confident they will be in learning English.

Design of Project

We designed and taught a series of eight lessons (see Table for details). In these eight lessons, students were exposed to authentic audio/visual materials, namely songs, films, TV commercials and cartoons. We wanted to show students that they should not limit themselves only to classroom learning, and that they can enrich and upgrade their standard of English by getting exposure to everyday English outside the classroom.

We did our experimental teaching in Wong Siu Chi Secondary School with a Form 2 class. Eight lessons were taken and the duration of each lesson was 35 minutes.

To test our hypotheses, we used questionnaires and observation forms as our evaluation instruments.

SCHEME OF WORK

Date	Type	Number of Lessons	Task	Objectives	Resources	Recommended Activities	Evaluations
	TV Programmes	2	Viewing the TV programme 'Round The Twist' for enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —To develop students' interest in watching English films —To help students get the gist of the story without Chinese sub-titles —To arouse students' imagination and creativity —To encourage students to share ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —TV programme 'Round The Twist' —worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —film viewing —completing worksheets —oral presentation —Q & A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —objectives achieved —students interested —students showed great interest in creating a new ending and sharing ideas
	Songs	2	Listening to songs for appreciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —To arouse students' interest in listening to English songs —To help students understand the message of the song 'Where Have All The Flowers Gone' —To cultivate students' concern for peace —To motivate students to learn English through songs —To enhance students' listening skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —songs recorded on tapes —music video of 'Where Have All The Flowers Gone' —worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —listening to songs —singing in chorus —group discussion —completing worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —objectives achieved —songs relevant, Ss motivated —livelier than mechanical drills —double period recommended
	TV Commercials	2	Viewing TV commercials for fun and central ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —To make use of TV commercials to bring active and profitable learning activities into class —To bring authenticity into classroom —To provide opportunities for students to acquire language —To promote students' listening skills for specific information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Assorted recordings of different TV commercials from domestic TV channels —worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —silent viewing —simulations —completing worksheets —commercial design competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —simulation games took up too much time —students interested —students motivated esp. by popular TV commercials
	Cartoon	2	Viewing cartoons for enjoyment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —To encourage students to watch cartoons for fun —To help students develop inter-personal skills —To improve students' listening skills —To help students learn how to give and take advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Cartoon series 'Adams Family' —worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —cartoon viewing —role-play —palm reading —Q & A —completing worksheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> —objectives achieved —students interested in both the cartoon and role-play —students responsive to teachers —students able to interact among themselves

Findings and Evaluation

From the questionnaire, we found that over 90% of the students became more interested and confident in listening to English songs and watching English films and cartoons. Most of them believed that these materials could help them improve their proficiency in English. On the whole, the majority of the students found the experimental lessons very useful and interesting. For details of the evaluation of each lesson, please refer to the Table.

In general, we consider our action research successful and worthwhile.

Recommendations for Improvement

In General

1. Be sure that the main objective of these lessons is fun, enjoyment and appreciation.
2. Teachers should familiarize themselves with the use of the audio/video equipment before the lessons.
3. Students should be given ample opportunities to participate.
4. Timing should be carefully considered since activities tend to take extra time during the lesson quite unnoticeably.
5. A wide variety of activities should be organized.

For Specific Types of Materials

TV Programmes

1. Avoid very long TV programmes that might drag the students into boredom.
2. Interest is the factor to be taken into consideration when selecting programmes.
3. Language in the programmes must be within students' level of understanding.
4. As students are used to passive domestic viewing, it is the role of the teacher to encourage more active viewing.

Songs

1. Songs which are more popular and those with a more catchy tune are better received.
2. Students should be given the chance to sing solo or perhaps in chorus first so as to create an atmosphere of enjoyment.
3. Music videos, if available, are preferable since they provide a visual impact for a more concrete image.

TV Commercials

1. If technically possible, the TV commercials should be presented with irrelevant scenes of other TV programmes edited out.
2. It is advisable to select TV commercials lengthier than 15 seconds, since most students need the first 2–3 seconds to warm up.

3. Make sure that the selected TV commercials are not only a feast for the eyes, but also a source of authentic language.

Cartoons

1. When selecting suitable materials, it is advisable to take cultural background into consideration.
2. Short, interesting cartoons are more desirable.

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT

IMPROVING STUDENTS' INTEREST AND SKILLS IN WRITING SHORT STORIES

Course No.: *ES 931*
Group 9(A): *Connie Chan*
Helena Lee
Jane Leung
Esther Pak
Mei-ling Wong
Group Tutor: *Shirley Chan*

Introduction

Secondary school teachers in Hong Kong often complain of getting unimaginative and totally predictable compositions from students. They are either lacking in interesting ideas or jumbled with illogical and contradicting events. When writing stories, students are unable to develop a plot or make the characters interesting.

One explanation for the above problems is our traditional approach to the teaching of writing. Undue emphasis is put on the correct language form. Students are so concerned with getting the grammar, spelling, etc. right that they do not put in enough effort to develop the content.

It was therefore our concern to alleviate the above situation. Our focus was on improving students' story-writing skills as story writing can provide a chance for students to express their feelings and thoughts towards people, situations, incidents, etc. They can exercise their imagination and learn to organize their ideas at the same time.

What Our Project Aimed to Do

Our aim was to raise students' interest and improve their skills in writing short stories. Through a planned series of activities and practice, we hoped that the students could learn some essential elements in story writing, which include how to begin and end a story, develop the plot and describe the characters in more creative ways.

The experimental teaching was carried out in a Form 3 class in St. Stephen's Girls' College.

How Materials were Tried Out

In order to find out their problems in writing stories, an introductory lesson was given. Students were asked to write a short story with a given beginning. Immediately after that, they filled in a questionnaire to state their

problems in writing stories. According to the findings of the survey, a set of writing activities were designed to cater for their needs. We then spent 6 days at the school to conduct the experimental teaching.

Summary of the Lessons

Lesson 1: Introduction to story writing

The teacher read out some of the students' essays in order to arouse their interest in story writing through the appreciation of their classmates' work. Then the teacher used the short story 'Silas the Good' as illustration to introduce the basic features of a story.

Lesson 2: Beginning a story

With the book covers of some stories or novels, the teacher introduced different types of stories. Through brainstorming and discussion, the teacher summarized one way of how to begin a story—with five Ws on the blackboard. Then four students formed a group and worked on one W card. The whole class made up two different stories. Worksheets were given as homework and preparation for the next lesson on character development.

Lesson 3: Description of characters

The teacher used cartoons to introduce different ways of describing characters in a story—describing the characters' gestures, movements, postures, mannerisms, moods, feelings, etc. Students acted according to the cues and completed a quiz.

Lesson 4: Planning a story

The teacher introduced five different ways of starting a story. Using 'Silas the Good' and 'Cinderella' as models, the teacher tried to make students understand the importance of developing a plot. Students practised using all the skills through planning an outline of a short story.

Lesson 5: Writing a story

Students wrote their stories according to their outlines in groups of three to four.

Lesson 6: Conclusion and evaluation

The teacher summed up the previous lessons and gave general comments on students' story writing. Students were asked to make a fair copy of their stories. Then they filled in a questionnaire so as to evaluate the effectiveness of the lessons on writing skills.

The Design of the Teaching Materials

In order to illustrate the basic features of a good story, 'Silas the Good' was chosen. 'Silas the Good' is a sophisticated story and it does possess the essential elements of a good story. However, in retrospect, the story might have been a bit too subtle and hence did not seem to suit the taste of the students. A story with a more dramatic plot might have been a better choice.

A series of worksheets were designed to guide students towards better writing. The focus of the worksheets was on:

- * 'Silas the Good'
- * Types of stories
- * Using adjectives to describe characters
- * Using adjectives to describe gesture, mannerism, movement and posture
- * Using adjectives to describe moods, states and feelings
- * How to start
- * Planning a story
- * Writing in groups

The majority of the students found the worksheets interesting and useful. The worksheets provided students with a greater range of activities in the lessons. They were useful tools, guiding students progressively towards better writing.

In the experimental teaching, students enjoyed completing the tasks—describing characters, guessing gestures, plotting story lines, planning a story and writing a story in groups. They also found the quiz on describing postures interesting. Though some students seemed a bit shy to discuss in English, most students found the group discussion useful.

Findings

The design of the action research aimed at finding out whether students had problems in writing short stories. It also aimed at locating the problems and providing the basic writing skills with which students could then be more equipped when writing.

The students' questionnaires showed that more than half of the students admitted having difficulties in putting in interesting details and developing characters in short stories. About 66.7% of the students found it difficult to develop the plot and 45.5% found it difficult to organize ideas logically while about 66.7% of the students lacked the vocabulary.

On completion of the experimental teaching, it was found that the great majority of the students felt more confident in writing short stories. More than half of the students found the lessons useful and interesting. 96.8% of the students thought that the lessons would help them write better stories in future and 93.5% of the students replied that they would plan their stories as suggested.

On the whole, the results were encouraging and justified the carrying out of our action research.

Recommendations

Should any teacher be interested in trying our action research out in future, we have the following suggestions:

- (1) The story used to illustrate the features of a short story should be chosen carefully with students' interest in mind. It should preferably be more exciting and dramatic.
- (2) Time should be devoted to introducing and teaching the story to students before it can be used to illustrate the features of a short story.
- (3) Less should be planned in each lesson so as to enhance retention on the part of students.
- (4) It is easier to get students warmed-up by starting off the experimental teaching with activities which involve participation from the whole class.
- (5) It is worthwhile teaching writing skills throughout the term as part of the syllabus.
- (6) Students should be taught the skills of rewriting drafts and then proofreading in separate lessons.
- (7) Although the emphasis of this project is on writing, students should be encouraged to discuss in English throughout the lessons.

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT

PROMOTING INTERACTION IN GROUP DISCUSSION

AT AS LEVEL

Course No.: *ES 931*

Group 6: *Au Suk Ying*
Cheung Siu Wong
Leung Kan Pui Tong
Li Shu Kwok
Yau Hing Fai
Yu Choi Heung

Group Tutor: *Ina Lam*

Introduction

The new oral examination at AS Level has caused a hitherto neglected aspect of the S6 English curriculum to come under the spotlight. The examination consists of a presentation and a group discussion. While students have difficulty in both, it is generally felt that they are particularly ill-prepared for the discussion part. That is why we decided to look into ways of helping students improve their discussion skills.

Problem Identification

Many factors can hamper students' performance in group discussion. These include, for example, their overall proficiency in the language, their knowledge of the topic, and their personality. We were especially concerned about two problems that many students appear to have:

1. Students tend to present rather than discuss. They spend a lot of time telling others all the points they have prepared and are not aware of the need to respond to others' views.
2. When they do respond to others, they do not have the appropriate language to express their responses naturally, clearly and effectively.

It is these two problems that we wanted to tackle in our project.

Methodology

To promote interaction in discussion, we believe that it is first of all necessary to make students understand that a discussion is a co-operative effort to share views and to solve problems. It is therefore imperative that they listen to and respond to other speakers.

When such an awareness has been aroused, students should then be trained in active, critical listening. They should be able to follow the line of argument, and judge whether a certain point is valid.

Next, students should learn about the possible moves to make in a discussion. For example, they may support a view and further elaborate, they may concede a point but express reservations, or they may request clarification of an idea.

Finally, students should be taught the language of discussion to help them make various moves, and practise using this in a number of specially designed activities.

Instruments

To observe students' performance in discussion and to collect feedback on our project, we made use of the following instruments:

1. Observation forms
2. Questionnaires
3. Videotapes
4. Audiotapes

The observation forms were used in the students' first and last group discussions. On these forms were recorded the number of responses made by each student, whether they were relevant or not, and also the number of responses which used appropriate language or otherwise. The teachers also made notes of some of the expressions uttered.

The questionnaires were completed by the students after their first and last discussions. These provided information on the difficulties students had, as well as feedback on how effective our experimental teaching was.

The first and last discussions done by one of the groups were videotaped, and some other groups also had theirs recorded on audio cassette tapes. These recordings were very useful tools for diagnosing problems, demonstration and analyses.

Summary of Lesson Plans

Lesson 1

Objective: To observe and record students' performance in group discussion for diagnostic purposes.

- Procedures:**
1. Students in groups of five discuss an assigned topic for 10 minutes.
 2. Students fill in a questionnaire.

Lessons 2 & 3

Objective: To arouse students' awareness of the need to respond to other speakers, to train them in critical listening, and to introduce possible strategies and language of discussion.

- Procedures:**
1. Students are invited to comment on possible responses to short speeches made by the teacher, who then gives feedback and offer more suggestions.

2. Students watch a demonstration discussion on videotape and complete a worksheet by identifying which of the items of discussion language listed there were actually spoken on the tape.
3. The teacher checks answers and introduces the language functions involved.
4. Video recording of one group's discussion is played. The teacher draws attention to successes and possible improvements.

Lessons 4 & 5

Objective: To introduce the language of discussion and to provide group activities to practise such language.

- Procedures:**
1. **Activity 1: Responding**
The teacher in each group reads out statements and each time asks a student to respond by making a specified move.
 2. **Activity 2: Matching**
In groups of five, students take a card from a pile. Some cards carry a statement, while others have the corresponding responses. Students then have to find their correct partners.
 3. **Activity 3: More Responding**
Each student in the group takes a card specifying a particular type of response. After the teacher reads out a statement, any student can, at any time, volunteer a response as instructed by his/her card. The next one then must respond to this speaker, again, as specified. And so the chain goes on.

Lesson 6

Objective: To allow students to practise discussion strategies and the language of discussion.

- Procedures:**
1. Students discuss an assigned topic.
 2. Students fill in another questionnaire.

Implementation

Experimental teaching was carried out with a Middle Six science class of boys and girls at Pui Ching Middle School where Chinese was the medium of instruction for all subjects except English. Their standard of English was considered above average. The six lessons were conducted smoothly with only minor modifications to the original plans made.

Findings and Conclusions

Based on the data collected through class observations, questionnaires, and video and audio recordings, we found out the following:

1. In their second discussion, the students stopped making presentations. They responded a lot more to other speakers.
2. Many students felt less inhibited when they wanted to say something. They now understood better their role in a discussion. They were also more ready to interrupt.
3. They used the freshly learnt language of discussion quite a lot, so they sounded more fluent.
4. At the end of the six lessons, about half of the students felt that they were very much better prepared to take an active part in discussion, while the other half thought they were a little better prepared. None had a negative response.

Recommendations

We would like to make the following recommendations about helping students improve their discussion skills:

1. It should be explained to students the nature of discussion and their role in it. A discussion is a concerted effort to share views, develop ideas, and solve problems.
2. Students should be trained in active, critical listening so that they can respond to what is said.
3. Students should be made aware of the possible moves in a discussion. They may have to support a view and elaborate, concede a point, express doubt, etc.
4. Students should be taught and given opportunities to practise the language of discussion through short oral activities requiring them to give responses to others' views.
5. When only one teacher is working with the class, the activities tried out in this project can be carried out by appointing a member of each group to read out the statements to which the other members respond.

Evaluation of Project

The objective of our project was to raise the level of interaction in group discussion in the sense that students would listen to one another and respond appropriately. This objective was largely achieved as the various instruments of data collection we used indicated that, by the end of our six sessions, the students were playing a more active role in their discussions, making more responses and using a greater variety of discussion language.

Of course, the language of discussion can only facilitate discussion; it can never enrich the content of discussion. The latter purpose requires a different approach to this multi-faceted problem.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that oral practice should be integrated into practice in the other language skills, preferably using the thematic approach. Yet it would be desirable to allocate special lessons to tackle the issues of interaction and the language of discussion quite early on in the S6 course.

Group Tutor: Mr. Lam	Yuen Suk Mei May	Lo Shuk Mei Sally	Lau Chi Kin Stephen	Law Yuet Ngor Frances	Choy Kwok Yee Joyce	Chan Wing Sum Clement
Group 6:	Au Yuet Yee Anna	ES 931	Course No.:			

Introduction

Various sectors of the business community are concerned about the inability of Form 5 school leavers to perform simple office tasks in English. The question as to how to improve their English language abilities for the workplace has become an important focus of language studies. It is against this background that we set the objective for our research, which was to evaluate the effectiveness of simulated activities in improving students' English in the workplace.

To minimize the limitations of classroom teaching and to provide the learners to practice the language learnt in a real and practical situation, we adopted simulated activities as our teaching approach. Simulated activities allow learners to be active participants in their language practice and all the learners have roles, functions, duties and responsibilities to fulfil. Despite the time-consuming preparation and the large number of handouts and teaching materials to produce for the lessons, simulated activities can provide a sense of reality as well as enhance learner responsibility.

Design of the Project

According to the report, English Language Proficiency Gap of Form 5 School Leaver, English is the Private Sector's main English language areas useful at work were not covered at school. The report also revealed that the speaking skill of employees in different sectors of business, the banking, retailing, trading and manufacturing was fairly low overall while their writing, reading and listening skills were ranked from middling to fairly low.

Regarding the need for improvement of students' basic skills, Form 5 school leavers in vocational English, we designed a 7-lesson module called

ACTION RESEARCH REPORT

SIMULATED ACTIVITIES FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE

Course No.: *ES 931*

Group 6: *Au Yeuk Yee, Anna*
Chan Wing Sum, Clement
Choy Kwok Yee, Joyce
Law Yuet Ngor, Frances
Lau Chi Kin, Stephen
Lo Shuk May, Sally
Yuen Suk Mi, May

Group Tutor: *Ina Lam*

Introduction

Various sectors of the business community are concerned about the inability of Form 5 school leavers to perform simple office tasks in English, like answering the telephone, taking messages, reading and writing memos. The question as to how to improve their English language abilities for the workplace has become an important focus of language studies. It is against this background that we set the objective for our research, which was to evaluate the effectiveness of simulated activities in improving students' English in the workplace.

To minimize the limitations of classroom teaching and to motivate the learners to practise the language learnt in a real and practical situation, we adopted simulated activities as our teaching approach. Simulated activities allow learners to be active participants in their language practice and all the learners have roles, functions, duties and responsibilities to fulfil. Despite the time-consuming preparation and the large number of handouts and teaching materials to produce for the lessons, simulated activities can provide a sense of reality as well as enhance learner responsibility.

Design of the Project

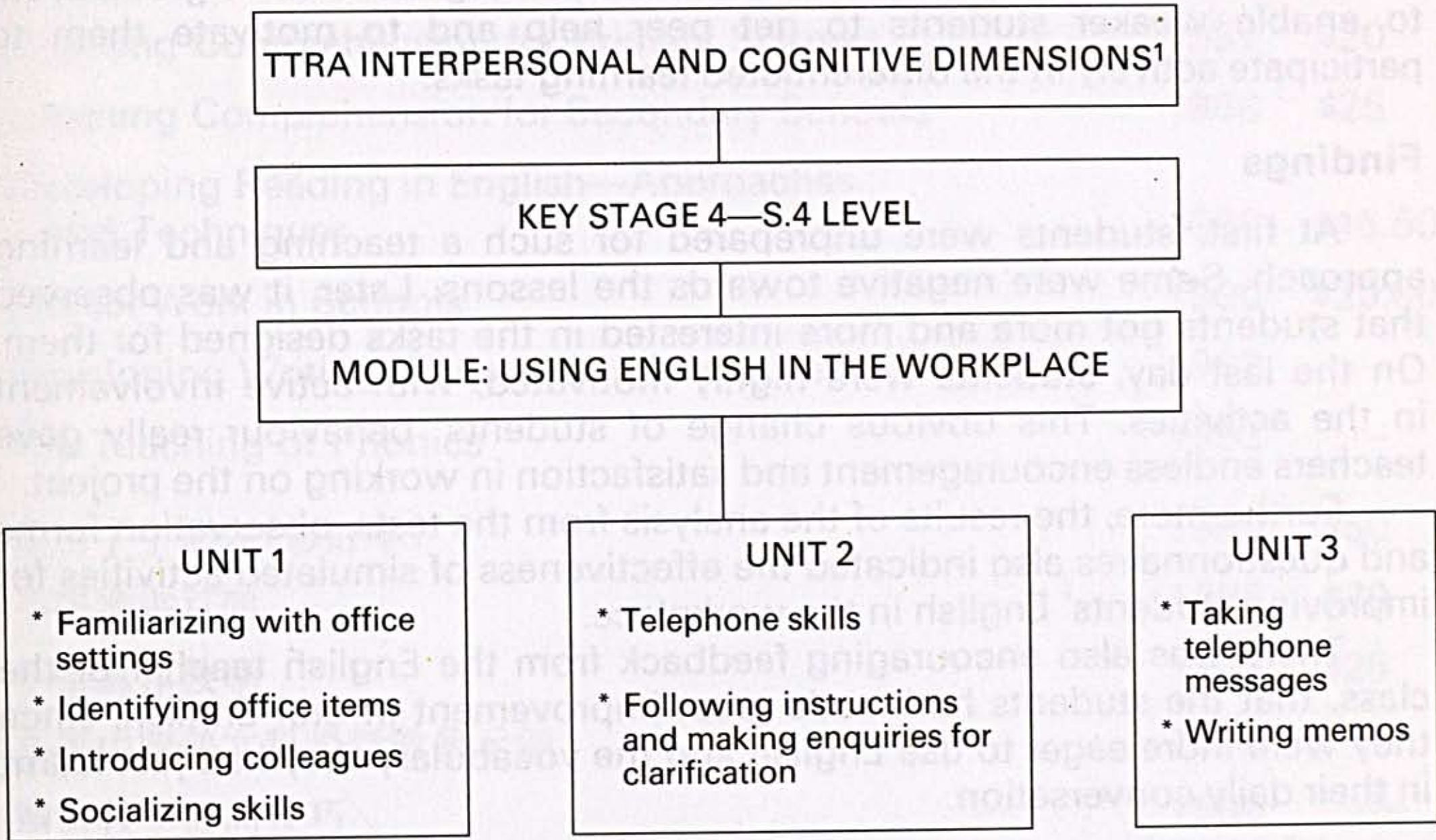
According to the report, 'English Language Proficiency Gap of Form 5 School-Leaver Employees in the Private Sector', some English language areas useful at work were not covered at school.

The report also revealed that the speaking skill of employees in different sectors of business like banking, retailing, trading and manufacturing was fairly low overall while their writing, reading and listening skills were ranked from middling to fairly low.

Perceiving the incompetence of students, especially Form 5 school-leavers, in vocational English, we designed a 7-lesson module called

‘Using English in the Workplace’ with six related topics. A series of simulated activities were introduced to students in an office setting in the hope that students could learn effectively in a more authentic situation.

Having consulted our group tutor at various stages, we revised, polished and structured all the units in our module in the following way:



Research Methodology

Our research methodology consisted of various approaches like observation, comparing test results, and summarizing comments and opinions on questionnaires.

The focuses of our evaluation were the effectiveness of simulated activities in the lessons, the language abilities of the learners before and after the lessons, the design and preparation of the activities, the performance of the students and the usefulness of the teaching materials.

At the beginning of the course, we set a test for the students in order to get an overall view of students’ competence in using English in the workplace. At the end of the course, we set another test for the students to find out if students had learned to handle workplace English.

Students were also given questionnaires for feedback on the nature of the lessons, the liveliness of the presentation, the participation and performance of the students themselves and the effectiveness of the simulated activities throughout the module.

Observation forms were given to teachers to assess the students’ performance in carrying out the tasks.

Cognitio College was the school we selected for the Action Research teaching due to the fact that it was a co-educational school located in San Po Kong, and most of the students came from the working class. We also had the background knowledge that the students did not get sufficient exposure to English, particularly spoken English. It was a mixed-ability class in which some students were very bright while some were very negative towards learning English. Because of this, we designed a lot of group work to enable weaker students to get peer help and to motivate them to participate actively in the differentiated learning tasks.

Findings

At first, students were unprepared for such a teaching and learning approach. Some were negative towards the lessons. Later, it was observed that students got more and more interested in the tasks designed for them. On the last day, students were highly motivated, with active involvement in the activities. This obvious change of students' behaviour really gave teachers endless encouragement and satisfaction in working on the project.

Furthermore, the results of the analysis from the tests, observation forms and questionnaires also indicated the effectiveness of simulated activities for improving students' English in the workplace.

There was also encouraging feedback from the English teacher of the class, that the students had made great improvement in oral English, since they were more eager to use English and the vocabulary they had just learnt in their daily conversation.

Recommendations and Reflection

It was felt that more time should be given to the 7-lesson module. It would be better if the subjects were F5 graduates since they would have the immediate need to learn vocational English. The simulated activities would be more effective if enough time was given and the classroom could be made to resemble an office more, with partitions and office equipment.

It was a valuable experience to have a group of teachers doing experimental teaching in a class. Each teacher was doing his or her part, supervising students, demonstrating the teaching points and so on. This paved the way for effective team teaching. After all, it was this tightly-knit team spirit of understanding and co-operation among teachers that made our Action Research Project worthwhile!

Note

1. TTRA is now known as TOC, the Target Oriented Curriculum; The Cognitive Dimension is now known as the Knowledge Dimension.

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The Editors (English): ILEJ,
Institute of Language of Education,
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15. Articles in books should be referenced in the following way: Kvan, E. 1969. 'Problems of bilingual milieu in Hong Kong: Strain of the two language system.' In *Hong Kong: A Society in Transition*, edited by T.C. Jarvie and J. Agassi, pp. 327-343. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

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