International Conference on Teaching-Learning Process in Universities at Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, on June 12-16, 1979 — A Report. [1]

Chan Geok Oon [2]
Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Pendidikan
Universiti Sains Malaysia

Dari 12hb. hingga 16hb. Jun, 1979 Universiti Sains Malaysia telah menganjur satu Persidangan Antarabangsa mengenai proses pengajaran-pembelajaran di universiti-universiti. Seramai seratus lapanpuluh orang peserta dari lebih kurang empat puluh universiti dan institusi pergajian tinggi dari negara-negara ASEAN dan lain-lain telah menghadiri Persidangan ini. Duapuluh dua kertas trend, kertaskerja, dan kertas latarbelakang telah dibincangkan serta beberapa sessi bengkel yang berfaedah dan berkesan telah diadakan semasa Persidangan ini. Laporan ini memberi maklumat tentang rasional, objektif-objektif dan thema-thema kecil (sub-themes) persidangan ini, serta kesan-kesan umum yang dihasilkan oleh Persidangan ini.

On June 12-16, 1979, some 180 university lecturers and administrators from over forty universities and institutions of higher learning in ASEAN countries and other parts of the world congregated at the campus of Universiti Sains Malaysia. They were here to take part in the International Conference on Teaching-Learning Process in Universities. This is the first conference on University Teaching-Learning to be organized by a local university for universities of the Asean countries.

What was the rationale for holding such a Conference? It was observed that, like universities in other parts of the world, ASEAN universities have begun to open their doors to a wide range of students with different learning abilities and learning styles as well as coming from different socio-economic backgrounds. These inherent differences give rise to numerous problems in the area of teaching and learning besides others. Because of this change in the scope of university education in recent years, there is an urgent need to reorganize our teaching techniques and methods in order to maximize students' potentials and abilities while they are in the university.

Since this is a common problem in most parts of the world, whether developed or underdeveloped, it was thought that an international conference would be a very timely and appropriate thing to have. It was believed that the mutual sharing of ideas and experiences by people from various parts of the world could provide fresh insights into the problem as a whole.

Objectives

A small ad hoc committee started working on the objectives and budget of the Conference about ten months before the actual conference date. The stated objectives were as given below:

1.   To provide participants an opportunity to consider afresh the goals and objectives of university education and how best these goals and objectives could be achieved.

2.   To help participants to become more aware of the teaching-learning problems in the universities.

3.   To provide participants an opportunity to consider ways and means of increasing the effectiveness of teaching and learning through the use of educational technology.

Theme and Sub-Themes

Based on the above stated objectives, the following theme and sub-themes of the Conference were drawn up:

1. Theme. "A fresh look into the Teaching-Learning Process and the Use of educational technology in the universities with special reference to ASEAN countries".

2. (a) Goals and objectives of university education.

    (b) Characteristics of university students and their learning problems.

    (c) Instructional problems and methods or strategies used for overcoming them.

    (d) Supportive infrastructure, academic staff training and the use of educational technology for developing effective teaching-learning process.

Papers and addresses

Trends, working and background papers on all the above sub-themes were presented at the plenary sessions and related issues were discussed at length in small group workshops.

A total of 22 papers[3] were presented over a period of five days by educationists and experts in the field of university teaching and learning, and in educational technology. Most of the paper presenters were from the ASEAN countries, although a few were invited from the more developed parts of the world like the United States of America, United Kingdom, Japan and Australia.

In addition to the Conference papers, short, relevant and useful addresses were made by the following distinguished personnel at the opening ceremony:

Yang Berhormat Dato' Musa Hitam, Minister of Education, Malaysia

Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Datuk Haji Hamdan Sheikh Tahir, Vice Chancellor, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Associate Professor Dr. Amir Awang, Chairman of the Organizing Committee.

The Conference was also accorded the high honour of having Tun Dr. Mohamed Suffian bin Hashim, Lord President of Malaysia's Federal Court, presenting the keynote address which was delivered immediately after the Opening Ceremony.

Valuable information and insights were gleaned from the above papers and speeches. Many of the pressing questions and issues related to teaching and learning in universities were raised and freely discussed by the participants during the three workshop sessions as well as during the plenary sessions which concentrated on the discussion of the findings of the workshops. Indeed, the mutual sharing of ideas and experiences by people from various parts of the world were most valuable, soul-searching and thought provoking. Many useful findings and recommendations emerged as a result.

Among other findings, the Conference strongly felt the need for more innovative approach to teaching and learning at the University. However, there are constraints in the development of innovative teaching because of a number of factors, namely:

1. Over-emphasis on research and the lack of recognition of the importance of teaching in the universities.

2. The constraints posed by the rigid examination system.

3. The bureaucratic administration, and its red-tapes acting as barriers to change.

4. The lack of sufficient financial support.

5. The lecturer's fear of failure.

6. Lack of time.

7. The lecturers still retain the traditional idea and attitudes toward the role of lecture.

To help overcome these and other problems raised at the Conference, it was recommended that there should be a staff development programme supported by appropriate infrastructure such as:

1. Moral support from administration through the provision of released time for staff who require more time for innovative instructional development, and the rewarding of staff who have made significant achievements in instructional development.

2. Financial support for training and maintenance of AV hardware and software and replenishing of consumable materials.

3. Appropriate professional training programmes for staff.

4. Efficient (minimum red-tape) media facilities and services for use by staff and students in the university.

Some considerations for the future were also put forward and presented in the final Conference handout "Findings and Recommendations". Below is a list of these considerations:

1. Establish infrastructure to facilitate staff exchange among institutions:

    (a) within the country and

    (b) among different countries.

2. Establish joint committee in the ASEAN region for planning university teaching-learning improvement activities.

3. Establish regional staff development centres in the country.

4. Organize conferences on more specific themes in university teaching and learning.

Based on the formal and informal feedbacks that we received from the participants, we can gladly say that the Conference was a success. Many university teachers and administrators were stimulated to take a more serious and critical view of the teaching-learning process, and the kind of supportive infrastructure that their own institutions were providing their teachers and students. Their five days in Universiti Sains Malaysia were well spent as many had testified. It was so worthwhile and stimulating that the Conference at one of the plenary sessions expressed the hope that this would not be the first and last conference of its kind in this part of the world. It was agreed that more similar conferences should be held in the years ahead on a regular basis. We hope that some other ASEAN countries would be willing to take on the task of organising and hosting the second international conference in the not too distant future, perhaps in two years' time.

We are grateful to the participants for their keen participation, to the donors for their support in financial terms, and to the local government agencies as well as many others who had contributed to the success of the Conference in one way or another. Lastly, Universiti Sains Malaysia is indeed glad that it had this opportunity to make its contribution towards closer regional cooperation through this International Conference even though it was only in a small way.

Note

[1] The Conference proceeding is now in the press and will be ready for distribution to participants as soon as it is published. For further information, please contact Dr. Chan Geok Oon, Educational Technology Unit, School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia.

[2] The Secretary of the Organising Committee for the Conference.

[3] *List of Papers Distributed:*

TOPIC I: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

1. *Trend Papers:*

    (a) Title: "Goals and objectives of university education – with special reference to developing countries"

        Author: Tun Dr. Mohamed Suffian b. Hashim
        Lord President, Federal Court, Malaysia
        Pro-Chancellor, University Sains Malaysia

(b) Title: "New goals and objectives of university education: exploration of some trends in Asia"

    Author: Dr. A. Latif,
             Asean Centre for Educational Innovation for Development, Unesco Regional Office for
             Education in Asia and Oceania, Bangkok.

TOPIC II: CHARACTERISTICS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA AND THEIR LEARNING PROBLEMS

1. *Trend Paper:*

    (a) Title: "Characteristics of university students in Malaysia and their learning problems"

        Author: Professor Dato' Awang Had Salleh,
                 Mara Institute of Technology,
                 Malaysia.

2. *Working Papers:*

    (a) Title: "Characteristics of University students and their learning problems: An Indonesian Case"

        Author: Dr. Willi Toisute,
                 Satya Watjana University,
                 Indonesia.

    (b) Title: "Characteristics of university students and their learning problems: The Singapore Case"

        Author: Dr. Ong Jin Hui,
                 Department of Sociology,
                 University of Singapore,
                 Singapore.

    (c) Title: "Characteristics of university students and their learning problems"

        Author: Dr. Natividad J. Munarriz
                 Department of Counselor Education,
                 College of Education,
                 University of the Philippines,
                 Philippines.

    (d) Title: "Characteristics of university students and their learning problems"

        Author: Dr. Paitoon Sinlarat
                 Department of Higher Education,
                 Chulalongkorn University,
                 Thailand.

TOPIC III: INSTRUCTIONAL PROBLEMS AND METHODS OR STRATEGIES USED FOR OVERCOMING THEM

1. *Trend Paper:*

    (a) Title: "Instructional problems and methods or strategies used for overcoming them"

        Author: Professor Lewis Elton
                 Institute for Educational Technology,
                 University of Surrey,
                 United Kingdom.

2. *Working Papers:*

    (a) Title: "Instructional problems and methods or strategies used for overcoming them: The Philippine Experience"

        Author: Professor Conrado P. Aquino,
                 University of the East,
                 Philippines.

    (b) Title: "Instructional problems and methods or strategies used to overcome them: A case study in the teaching of of Microeconomics"

        Author: Professor Somkid Kaewonsonthi
                 Chulalongkorn University,
                 Thailand.

(c) Title: "Instructional problems and methods or strategies used for overcoming them: Development of a teaching skills training system by protocol approach".

Author: Professor Masami Koganei
Center for Educational Technology,
Tokyo Gakugei University,
Japan.

(d) Title: "Instructional problems and methods or strategies for overcoming them"

Authors: Dr. S. Radhakrishna, Dr. S Srinivasan and Dr. T.S. Natarajan,
Department of Physics,
Indian Institute of Technology,
Madras, India.

3.   *Background Papers:*

(a) Title: "The teaching-learning process in Political Science."

Author: Dr. Wu Teh Yao,
College of Graduate Studies,
Nanyang University,
Singapore.

(b) Title: "An experiment in active teaching and learning in Physiology"

Authors: Dr. Hashim Effendi and Dr. Yasmeiny Yazir
Department of Physiology,
School of Medicine,
University of North Sumatra,
Medan, Indonesia.

(c) Title: "Selective review of research studies showing media effectiveness: A primer for media directors"

Author: Professor John A. Moldstad
Division of Instructional Systems Technology,
Indiana University,
United States.

TOPIC IV: SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE, ACADEMIC STAFF TRAINING AND USE OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE TEACHING LEARNING PROCESS

1.   *Trend·Paper:*

(a) Title: "The role of instructional technology in higher education institutions in the United States"

Author: Professor John A. Moldstad
Division of Instructional Systems Technology,
Indiana University,
United States.

2.   *Working Papers:*

(a) Title: "Supportive infrastructure, professional training and the use of Educational Technology for developing effective teaching-learning Processes in Malaysian universities."

Authors: Associate Professor Boey Chee Khiew and Dr. Chan Geok Oon
Educational Technology Unit,
School of Educational Studies,
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang,
Malaysia.

(b) Title: "Supportive infrastructure, academic staff training and the use of Educational Technology for developing effective teaching-learning process"

Author: Dr. G. Rex Meyer
Centre for Advancement of teaching,
Macquarie University,
North Ryde,
Australia.

(c) Title: "The development of tertiary teaching services in the University of Hong Kong"

     Author: Mr. Anthony R. Marsh
              School of Education,
              University of Hong Kong,
              Hong Kong.

(d) Title: "Educational Technology for the help of conducting better instruction"

     Author: Professor Kunihiro Suetake
              Tokyo Institute of Technology,
              Japan.

3.   *Background Papers:*

(a) Title: "Academic staff development in Australia"

     Author: Dr. Terry Hore,
              Higher Education Advisory and Research Unit (HEARU),
              Monash University,
              Australia.

(b) Title: "The role of an instructional development unit in improving university teaching and
              learning.

     Author: Dr. Ronald F. Turner-Smith,
              Chinese University of Hong Kong,
              Hong Kong.