# Program Factors in Effective Foreign and Second Language Teaching

*JACK C RICHARDS*
*SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore*

## Abstract

This paper examines four factors that can have a significant impact on the success of language teaching programs. Institutional factors include the school's organization culture and its approach to the maintenance of educational quality. Teacher factors include the skills and qualifications of teachers and the level of professional support provided. Teaching factors include the philosophy of teaching reflected in the program and how good teaching is supported and maintained. Learning factors include learners' views of the program as well as learning styles and motivations and how these are addressed within the program. Each of these factors is examined and suggestions offered as to how they can contribute to the achievement of quality language teaching.

Language teaching occupies an important place in the curriculum of every country in the SEAMEO region. In the ongoing quest for improvement in standards of teaching as well as learning attainments, many factors need to be continually reviewed, including the design of the curriculum, the quality of instructional materials, the role of tests, provisions for teacher training, and the kinds of administrative support provided by schools and educational institutions. The principal educational resources however are teachers and the kinds of teaching they are able to provide in their schools and classrooms. The focus of this paper is how quality teaching can be achieved and maintained in a language program. It seeks to examine factors that are involved in creating conditions for good teaching to take place. Quality teaching is achieved not only as a consequence of how well teachers teach but through creating contexts and work environments that can facilitate good teaching. In this paper four factors will be examined: institutional factors, teacher factors, teaching factors, and learner factors.

## The Institution

### The organizational culture

The organizational culture of a school refers to the ethos and environment that exists within a school, the kinds of communications and decision-making that takes place, and the management and staffing structure it supports. A school's organization culture is revealed in the way the following issues are answered:

- What are the school's goals and mission?
- What is the school's management style?
- What shared values do staff have?
- What are the decision-making characteristics of the school?
- What roles do teachers perform?
- How is teaching and other work planned and monitored?
- What provision is made for staff development?

- How are courses and curriculum planned?
- How receptive is the school to change and innovation?
- How open are communication channels?

These and related questions will be examined throughout this paper. Basic to the organizational culture of an institution is its management structure, since as Davidson and Tesh (1997) point out, its organizational design:

> "...is built by managerial decisions that delineate the number and type of jobs in the organization and the processes that subordinate, control, and link them, such as authority relationships, communication networks, and specific planning and organizational techniques."
>
> (Davidson and Tesh 1997, p. 177)

Davidson and Tesh describe two types of organizational structure that are commonly found in schools and other kinds of organizations, the mechanistic model and the organic model. The mechanistic model is a bureaucratic approach to organizing collective activities that stresses "the need for authority, hierarchies of control, and an explicit chain of command" (Davidson and Tesh 1997, p. 178). Davidson and Tesh suggest that many language programs reflect this organizational model and cite the following examples.

"
1. Many programs value specialization; that is, they prefer that teachers specialize in one or two particular levels and skills. For example, a teacher may be assigned level-three reading and level-three writing, teaching those classes, and only those classes each term, and becoming an expert in those areas.
2. Many programs provide teachers not only with a course curriculum, but also with a class syllabus outlining which pages and exercises are to be covered each day. The more detailed the syllabus, the more uniformity there will be across each level in the program. Administrators in large programs, in programs that make use of graduate teaching assistants, or in multiple-site programs may find this advantageous because it eliminates uncertainty in teaching performance resulting from individual differences, professional inexperience, or the absence of propinquity.
3. Some programs have explicit chains of command. All communication in such programs is vertical. If moving upward, the communication must pass through each superior in the chain of command until it reaches the appropriate level. If moving downward, it must pass through each subordinate in like manner.
4. Many programs have hiring, promotion, and dismissal policies that match those of the mechanistic model. They hire based on professional qualifications such as degree, field, length and type of professional experience, and letters of recommendation; they promote based on seniority, program contributions, and professional achievements; and they terminate only after due process has occurred."

(Davidson and Tesh, 1997, p. 179)

The organic model of organizational design by comparison,

"…is one that maximizes flexibility and adaptability, encourages complete confidence and trust between superior and subordinates, and taps a wide range of human motivations to achieve organizational goals. Communication flows in all directions, both vertically and laterally. Teamwork is substantial, and decision-making and control functions are shared widely throughout the organization."

(Davidson and Tesh, 1997, p. 179)

Aspects of the organic model are also found in many language programs. Davidson and Tesh cite the following examples:

"
1. Numerous program administrators value flexibility and adaptability; they expect their teachers to teach most, if not all, skills in most, if not all, levels. Thus they encourage a range of professional development activities for each faculty member. Level, skill, or content area specialization is viewed as an obstacle not only to the professional growth of the specialist, but also to other teachers who may wish to teach such classes, but cannot because they are not the "experts".
2. Many language programs provide opportunities for professional training that build up the value and worth of each faculty and staff member. They hold timely, well-organized, and appropriately focused in-service or residency meetings with internal or outside experts. They provide travel funding to relevant local, regional, and national professional meetings. They provide release time for materials development. They encourage research, publications, and grant proposal writing.
3. Numerous programs allow for communication not only vertically, but also laterally through cooperative teaching, peer coaching and observation, and joint piloting of new materials.
4. A large number of programs value teamwork and have established a committee system so that decision-making and control functions are shared widely throughout the program. Committee recommendations may be advisory or binding. Areas of concern include long-range planning, circular and personnel matters, professional development, and program marketing, to name a few."

(Davidson and Tesh, 1997, p. 180)

Davidson and Tesh suggest that most language programs have features of both the organic and mechanistic models, depending on the size of the program and the type of staff working in it. With a large program staffed by experienced and mature professionals, a more organic approach is likely. With smaller programs or programs dependent on less experienced staff, a more mechanistic approach may be needed.

## Quality indicators in an institution

Language teaching institutions vary greatly in terms of how they view their educational mission. Some schools – hopefully the majority – are committed to providing quality educational services. They have a clearly articulated mission. They take seriously the development of a sound curriculum and set of programs, hire the best available teachers, provide quality instruction and the kinds of support teachers need to achieve their best.

The following characteristics are indicators of the quality of a school or educational institution (Morris, 1994):

1. There are clearly stated educational goals
2. There is a well-planned, balanced and organized program which meets the needs of its students
3. Systematic and identifiable processes exist for determining educational needs in the school and placing them in order of priority.
4. There is a commitment to learning, and an expectation that students will do well.
5. There is a high degree of staff involvement in developing goals and making decisions
6. There is a motivated and cohesive teaching force with good team spirit.
7. Administrators are concerned with the teachers' professional development and are able to make the best use of their skill and experience
8. The school's programs are regularly reviewed and progress towards their goals are evaluated

Language teaching is the responsibility of both the public and private sector. While public sector teaching (e.g. in schools or other institutions) is generally under the direction of a ministry of education, which assumes responsibility for setting and maintaining goals and standards, in the private sector not all schools however embrace a philosophy of quality. Some may be viewed by their owners as little more than business opportunities. Money spent on hiring qualified teachers and providing for teacher training and on-going professional development is limited if non-existent. An educational mission has not been developed nor a plan to achieve it. Teachers may be poorly motivated, poorly qualified, and on poor employment terms. Staff turnover is high and the reputation of the institute low. Maintaining educational quality within a business environment is a challenge for many private language schools. It is increasingly the case that education is a business and the challenge is to meet educational objectives and standards while at the same time meeting financial imperatives, whether it be cost-recovery, or profit making. Being sound educationally and sound financially are however not necessarily mutually exclusive. The following kinds of questions need to be addressed if an institution seeks to build quality and effectiveness into its programs (Henry 1997, p. 79):

1. How can we determine the quality of the language program?
2. How can we improve the quality of the language program?
3. What do we value most in the language program?
4. What type of curriculum best meets student needs?
5. What do we need to support the curriculum?
6. What kind of language proficiency testing is needed for accurate student placement?
7. What qualities are we looking for in faculty?

In the following sections we will examine some of the key dimensions of quality and how quality can become a focus in a school or language program.

### *A sense of mission*

What goals does the institution have? Does it exist to serve an important educational purpose that provides the rationale for the range of courses and services it offers? A useful format for articulating a school's sense of mission is in the form of a mission statement. Such a statement should be developed collectively by those who have a

commitment to the success of the institution. Once it is in place a mission statement can serve as a reference point to assess proposals for new initiatives or programs within an institution and to provide a basis for evaluation of its performance over time.

### A strategic plan

A strategic plan is a description of the long-term vision and goals of an institution and the means it undertakes for fulfilling them. Based on approaches used in successful businesses and industries, the notion of strategic planning is now increasingly seen as essential to the success of any organization, including schools. Klinghammer (1997, p. 64) provides a useful overview of the function of strategic planning in effective language programs, and identifies six elements of a good strategic plan:

*Vision* – a statement of where a language program is going in the long term and what its members hope to accomplish
*Values* – the principles that guide the conduct of a program, i.e. in terms of responsibility to students, teachers and other stakeholders
*Purpose* – the basic reasons for the institution's existence
*Mission* – a description of the institution's vision in terms of specific goals that it seeks to achieve, usually within a particular time period. This is expressed in form of the *mission statement* (see above)
*Goals* – specific steps that relate to each aspect of the mission, such as increasing student enrollments, developing teaching materials or providing an environment where teachers can carry out classroom research
*Strategies* – the methods and activities that will be used to attain the goals.

### Quality assurance mechanisms

Quality assurance refers to systems a school has in place to ensure the quality of its practices. For example how does one assure that the best quality staff are employed? Is there a transparent recruitment process or is staff recruitment made through personal networks? What process is in place to select and review textbooks? Are textbooks chosen by teachers on the basis of quality and relevance or because of other factors? What systems are in place to ensure that tests and others forms of assessment are sound and fair? Are grades sometimes adjusted up or down by the administration based on unknown criteria? Factors relevant to creating a culture of quality assurance in an institution are:

- a formulated policy on quality assurance has been articulated and is familiar to all staff
- reasonable and acceptable standards have been determined for all aspects of quality, such as employment, publicity, materials, facilities and teachers' dress codes
- systems are in place to ensure that quality is regularly assessed and corrections made where necessary
- a reward system is in place to ensure that those who attain high quality in their work are recognized
- support is available to enable staff to improve quality (e.g. of their teaching or materials) if necessary

### A sound curriculum

A sound curriculum is reflected in the following features of a school's programs:

- the range of courses offered corresponds to the needs of learners
- the curriculum is coherent: the courses represent a rational approach to achieving the school's mission.
- courses have been developed based on sound educational principles with due attention to recognized curriculum development processes
- course descriptions including aims, goals, syllabuses and course organization have been developed
- teaching materials and tests are of high quality, have been carefully selected or developed and are regularly reviewed and revised
- mechanisms are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning
- the curriculum is subject to ongoing review and renewal. There is ongoing interest in identifying strengths and weaknesses and bringing about improvements in all aspects of the curriculum

### Flexible organizational framework

We noted above that effective schools and language programs are characterized by administrators who are open to change, flexible, and who encourage teachers to innovate. There is an atmosphere of trust and support and staff are supported by reasonable teaching loads, rewards, and opportunities for professional development. The management style is participatory rather than top-down (Stoller, 1997).

### Good internal communications

Good internal communications depend on setting up systems that facilitate communications among teachers and between teachers and administrators. Such systems include:

- Regular meetings and briefings which bring people up to date on important issues and provide opportunities for input
- Access to administrative leaders and visibility of administrators in the institutional setting. In addition the administration is receptive to teachers' suggestions.
- Shared decision-making resulting from opportunities for multiple sources of input on key decisions
- Availability of relevant course documentation and information for those who need it
- Written guidance for staff on their different roles and job duties so that boundaries and expectations are clear
- A system for collecting feedback on all aspects of the program and procedures for making constructive use of feedback
- A system for staff support and for getting constructive comments on other people's course outlines and teaching materials
- Regular evaluation or feedback sessions in which staff can describe and compare experiences, problems, and solutions
- Regular newsletters, bulletins or e-mail communication in which colleagues can pass on experiences, give and ask for suggestions and report on successful teaching experiences

- Informal gatherings which allow staff to get to know each other and develop collegial relations and friendships

***Professional treatment of teachers***

The employment conditions of language teachers vary around the world. In public education in Southeast Asia, language teachers, like teachers of other subjects, are generally recognized as trained professionals with specialized skills and knowledge. Leung and Teasdale (1998) point out however that the status of ESL teachers in mainstream education in many parts of the world is problematic and one of the major obstacles teachers face.

> In the primary and secondary sectors ESL teachers work in mainstream classrooms, often in highly varied and unpredictable situations. ESL is not a curriculum subject and it has to be delivered through the content of other subjects. ESL teachers do not generally have sole control of classroom management; they often work as support or collaborative teachers and are with particular classes usually only for a limited number of hours per week. The pupils can, and do, arrive at different times of the year, their English language learning needs varying according to their previous schooling and circumstances. There are no clearly established and widely accepted disciplinary based teaching procedures (in the way that, for instance, science or music may have) and no clearly defined outcomes which are tailored to the specific needs of ESL pupils.

The broader issue here is whether teachers are treated as professionals or simply regarded as members of a work force. Eskey (1997, p. 24) comments on the low academic status of Intensive English Programs in American universities, and the fact that they often have to deal with oppressive budgetary arrangements:

> Most are required to be self-supporting and many are frankly regarded as cash cows that are expected to generate large surpluses for the support of more prestigious programs…. This means maximizing income and minimizing costs, which in practice means radical understaffing, low salaries for both staff and faculty, large numbers of part-time faculty with few or no benefits, and major corner-cutting with respect to equipment, facilities, and faculty perks such as support for curriculum development, in-service training, and attending professional conferences.

The extent to which teachers are regarded as professionals is indicated by the following:

- **employment terms and conditions:** Do teachers have a written contract that clearly lays out their roles and responsibilities? Are they given full time contracts or employed simply on a casual basis with few or no benefits? A program that is staffed entirely by teachers on casual terms cannot hope to attract the same level of commitment as one staffed by teachers on long term contracts.
- **support and reward systems:** What support is available to help teachers carry out their varying roles and what rewards for quality service?

Both factors are likely to influence teacher morale. Do teachers speak positively of their school or institute and are they proud to work there or do they feel undervalued and exploited?

*Opportunities for teacher development*

Teachers need to develop long-term career goals and expand their roles and responsibilities over time if they are to continue to find teaching rewarding. A quality institution provides opportunities for teachers to develop their careers. ESL/EFL is a rapidly changing field and teachers need regular opportunities to update their professional knowledge and skills. Such opportunities may be provided for in a number of ways.

- **conference participation:** teachers can participate in professional conferences and seminars networking with other teachers and learning about trends, issues and practices
- **workshops and in-service seminars:** specialists from outside the school or staff from the school can offer workshops and seminars on topics of interest to the staff
- **reading groups:** teachers can put together reading groups and read and discuss articles or books of interest
- **peer observation:** teachers can take turns observing each other's classes as a basis for critical reflection and discussion about teaching approaches
- **writing about teaching**: teachers can keep a reflective diary or journal and share this with colleagues
- **project work:** teachers can be given the opportunity to develop projects such as classroom materials, videos and other teaching resources
- **action research:** teachers can conduct small scale classroom research on their teaching

(Richards and Lockhart 1994)

The extent to which an institution provides such opportunities for its teachers or encourages them to participate in such activities is a good indicator of how it views its teachers.

**The teaching context**

The last set of factors that affect the quality of teaching in a program relate to the institution context in which teachers work.

*Size and staff structure*: The size of a school and its administrative structure influences many aspects of a teacher's work. Working in an institute with a staff of five teachers is very different from working in one with a staff of 100. In the former case the teachers are likely to be a closely knit team who know each other well. In the latter case teachers may work more independently and may not feel that their individual contribution is crucial to the success of the program. In this case the school will need to ask what can be done to enable teachers to get to know each other and to develop a sense of collegiality. Options available include informal professional activities such as "brown-bag lunches" as well as social activities. The administration will also need to develop mechanisms for communicating with such a large group of teachers (see above).

*Equipment*: Schools vary greatly in the amount they have invested in equipment and technology. Some schools make extensive investments in such things as computers, cassette and CD players, video recorders, OHT machines and photocopiers recognizing that these are essential tools for teachers and can have a positive effect on teaching,

staff work load and morale. Where such investment is lacking there may be a negative impact on teachers' work load.

**Support staff**: Adequate support staff can also facilitate teachers' work. Is there secretarial or administrative staff to help with typing, time-tabling, duplicating and administration? If not, what percentage of teachers' time is spent on non-instructional chores and at what cost?

**Teacher work space**: One way of determining how seriously a school regards its teachers and the work they do is the work space it provides for its teachers. Is there a staff room for teachers where they can interact with colleagues, carry out lesson preparation, mark assignments and prepare teaching materials and handouts?

**Teacher resource room**: Teachers need access to a good range of current ESL textbooks, resource books, materials and magazines located in a resource room or similar facility in order to update their professional knowledge and get new ideas to feed into their teaching.

**Teaching facilities:** Where does teaching take place and how adequate are teaching facilities? In addition to classrooms is there a multi-media lab or computer lab, language lab, self-access center and student reading room? What impact do these facilities have on the quality of the program?

**Class size**: What is the size of classes? Current wisdom suggests that class size should not exceed 15 for most language classes though in many contexts teachers have to work with much larger groups. Sometimes class size is outside the control of language providers. However, it should be made known to the client that class size affects the quality of instruction. The optimal class size needs for each type of course needs to be established based on teacher, learner and school factors and when needed the reasons for standards set need to be explained to clients.

## The Teachers

While many things can be done to create a context for good teaching it is teachers themselves who ultimately determine the success of a program. Good teachers can often compensate for deficiencies in the curriculum, the materials, or the resources they make use of in their teaching. In this section we will consider the teachers themselves and how their role can be supported in a program.

### Skills and qualifications

Language teaching institutions vary greatly in the type of teachers they employ. In some situations there may be a choice between native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English with varying levels of English language proficiency. Within both groups there may be further choices possible based on teaching experience and professional qualifications in TESL/TEFL. Views concerning the appropriate qualifications of language teachers have changed in recent years as the field of TESOL has become more professionally demanding of itself and sought to develop standards for language teachers (Leung and Teasdale 1998: TESOL 1986b). There is a much greater awareness today that an expert language teacher is a highly skilled professional. According to Lortie (1975), a profession is characterized by:

- a homogeneous consensual knowledge base
- restricted entry
- high social status
- self-regulation
- the legal right to govern their daily work affairs

Although Lortie argues that many branches of teaching cannot be classed as a profession by these criteria the field of language teaching has done much in recent years to conceptualize and define its knowledge base, to regulate entry to the profession and to monitor the practices of teaching institutions. Increasingly language schools are recruiting better trained and better qualified language teachers and operating within defined standards of quality. But what does skill and expertise in teaching English as a second or foreign language consist of? Core components of teacher knowledge include the following:

- *practical knowledge*: the teacher's repertoire of classroom techniques and strategies
- *content knowledge*: the teacher's understanding of the subject of TESOL, e.g. pedagogical grammar, phonology, teaching theories, second language acquisition, as well as the specialized discourse and terminology of language teaching
- *contextual knowledge*: familiarity with the school or institutional context, school norms, and knowledge of the learners, including cultural and other relevant information
- *pedagogical knowledge*: ability to restructure content knowledge for teaching purposes, and to plan, adapt, and improvise
- *personal knowledge*: the teacher's personal beliefs and principles and his or her individual approach to teaching
- *reflective knowledge*: the teacher's capacity to reflect on and assess his or her own practice

In describing teacher's skills it is possible to compare teachers according to whether they are **untrained** or **trained** and whether they are **novice** or **experienced**. The training dimension refers to possession of a professional qualification in language teaching while the experience dimension refers to classroom experience. Initial teacher training typically sets out to give teachers what can be called "basic technical competence". This consists of an introductory understanding of the subject matter of TESL, mastery of basic classroom teaching processes as well as approaches to teaching the four skills. For example the UCLES Certificate in Language Teaching to Adults – CELTA – (UCLES, 1996) a widely taught initial qualification for language teachers focuses on six areas of basic teaching skills:

- language awareness
- the learner, the teacher and the teaching/learning context
- planning for effective teaching of adult learners of English
- classroom management and teaching skills
- resources and materials for teaching
- professional development

If an institution recruits teachers with a good command of English (or who are native speakers of English) but without a good command of basic teaching skills, then opportunities for basic training will need to be provided. Roberts (1998, pp. 67-68)

suggests that compared to experienced teachers, novice teacher tend to have the following characteristics:

- novice teachers' perceptions of classroom events are relatively undiscriminating and simpler than those of experienced teachers;
- they are less able to select which information is salient when planning a lesson;
- they lack knowledge of what to expect of pupils, what challenges to set and what difficulties to anticipate;
- they tend to work from the textbook rather than in terms of pupil attainment levels;
- they lack practical classroom management routines to keep pupils on task;
- their concern with control makes it difficult for them to focus on pupil learning;
- they lack an established 'pedagogic content knowledge';
- they lack the practical experience from which to construct personal meanings for theoretical or specialized terms;
- they lack a coherent system of concepts with which to think about teaching;
- they lack a specialized vocabulary with which to analyze and discuss teaching.

Opportunities to develop these skills can be provided in the following ways:

- observation of experienced teachers
- observation of training videos
- short theory courses
- practice teaching under the supervision of experienced teachers
- working with a mentor teacher

When the teacher is a non-native speaker of English (NNS) additional issues may arise. Roberts (1998, p. 97) suggests that the following characteristics may be relevant to their needs:

- NNS teachers may lack confidence in their English language ability and give their own language improvement a high priority;
- NNS teachers may undergo an erosion in their English language performance through its restriction to classroom discourse;
- They may not have native-speaker (NS) intuitions about the language and may need linguistic rules as a source of security; they may avoid classroom activities which demand unpredictable language use and where rapid and intuitive assessment of accuracy and appropriacy are needed; they may need the support of a textbook more than NS teachers;
- They have the personal experience to understand their learners' difficulties;
- Where teachers and learners share a common culture, group norms may exert a powerful influence on their behavior, whereas NS teachers may be exempt from such norms;
- Language teaching behavior cannot be separated from pedagogic models inherited from the mother tongue culture (Koranic, Confucian, African etc,) in such attributes as institutional culture, attitudes to authority and knowledge, adult-child relationships etc.
- The place of English in society at large has a profound influence on the purposes of English language education, the English language curriculum, and therefore the nature of the teacher's work.

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As teachers develop experience in teaching the institution needs to create an environment where teachers can further develop their teaching skills and subject matter knowledge, deepen their understanding of teaching and themselves as teachers and have the opportunity for further professional development. Teachers now need to be given opportunities to do the following:

- engage in self-reflection and evaluation
- identify their areas of strength and weakness
- develop specialized knowledge and skills about many aspects of teaching
- develop curiosity and interest in many different aspects of teaching
- expand their knowledge base about research, theory, and issues in teaching
- take on new roles and responsibilities, such as supervisor, mentor teacher, teacher-researcher, or materials writer
- develop involvement in professional organizations

Activities of the kind referred to above in the discussion of teacher development will be appropriate here.

**Support for teachers**

If teachers are expected to teach well and to develop their teaching skills and knowledge over time they need ongoing support. This may take a number of forms:

*Orientation*: New teachers need a careful orientation to teaching assignments in order to clarify the goals of the program, teaching approaches, resources, problems to anticipate, and solutions. Many programs use a "buddy system" for this purpose which links new teachers with experienced teachers for mentoring and support as needed during their first months in the program. New teachers need to feel that they are valued and their concerns appreciated and responded to.

*Adequate materials*: Teachers need good materials to teach from either in the form of commercial textbooks or institutionally prepared materials. Nothing is more demotivating to teachers than having to use a textbook that no one likes or materials that are poorly prepared or presented. Teachers need to be involved in the choice of materials and guidelines may be needed on the role of materials in the program.

*Course guides*: Course guides should be provided for each course offered in the program with information on the course, aims and objectives, recommended materials and methods, suggested learning activities and procedures for assessment.

*Division of responsibilities*: Teachers have many different responsibilities apart from teaching. They may be involved in course planning, course co-ordination, testing, preparation of materials and mentoring. Deciding which members of a team are best suited to different tasks and providing the support and training needed for specific roles is important. If a senior teacher's responsibilities include writing progress reports on other teachers' performance training may be needed in how to prepare useful reports. Creating job descriptions for different responsibilities can also establish clear lines of demarcation and responsibility, which are important in strengthening staff morale.

*Further training*: Teachers in an institution may not always have the particular knowledge and skills a program needs so it may be important to select staff for

specialized training to meet these needs. For example a staff member may be sent to a workshop on using multi-media resources in the classroom or on alternative assessment.

*Teaching release*: If teachers are expected to play a key role in some aspect of the program such as materials development or mentoring they may need to be given release time from teaching to enable them to devote time to this. This acknowledges the value with which the institution regards such activities.

*Mentors*: A system of mentoring is often helpful in a school where there are teachers of different levels of experience and training. The role of a mentor is to give teachers, particularly less experienced teachers, someone with whom they can sound off ideas, share problems and get advice. Typically this person is not a manager but another teacher in whom the teacher has confidence and trust.

*Feedback*: Teachers need to be told when they are doing well and when there are problems with their performance. Good teaching sometimes goes unnoticed. In the case of negative feedback ways need to be found for providing constructive and non-threatening feedback. Feedback can be face to face, in writing, or on the telephone depending on the kind of feedback it is.

*Rewards*: Teachers who perform well should receive acknowledgement for good service. This could include being sent to a conference or in-service course or having their name listed in a staff newsletter.

*Help lines*: Teachers often work for long periods in relative isolation. Who should they turn to when they have problems with student discipline, difficulties working with another teacher or difficulties in using course materials? Teachers should know exactly who to turn to for help in solving different kinds of problems.

*Review*: Time should be allocated for regular review of the program, problem solving and critical reflection. These activities help solve practical problems and also develop a sense of collegiality among staff.

## The Teaching Process

The focus here is on the teaching practices that occur within a program, how these can be characterized and how quality teaching can be achieved and maintained.

### Teaching model and principles

A language curriculum can be viewed as a network of interacting systems involving teachers, learners, materials, schools, administrators and curriculum planners, and choices at one level affect other elements in the system. Thus the choice of a particular curriculum philosophy or ideology implies a particular model of teaching. Roberts (1998,103) compares two teaching models implicit in many language programs: the *operative* model and the *problem-solving* model:

> "In an 'operative' model the teacher is restricted to meeting the requirements of a centralized system, such as the delivery of a textbook as planned, to a set timescale. Such a limited role, limited to that of curriculum transmission, implies training objectives based on mastery of a set of

competencies determined by the centralized syllabus. In the case of the 'problem solver' model, a decentralized curriculum gives teachers greater autonomy in making educational decisions. A diversified language curriculum, characterized by adaptation to learners' needs, requires teachers to be able to diagnose problems and adapt materials and design original learning activities."

The former can be viewed as a teaching model compatible with a mechanistic model of organization design and the latter to the organic model (see above). In planning the kind of teaching that will characterize a language course it is necessary to develop a model of teaching that is compatible with the overall assumptions and ideology of the curriculum and of the language program. Different models of teaching make different assumptions about the nature of language and of language learning, the roles of teachers, learners, and instructional materials, and different assumptions about the processes of language learning and teaching.
In language teaching programs, teaching models are often based on particular methods or approaches. For example:

*The communicative approach*: the focus of teaching is authentic communication; extensive use is made of pair and group activities that involve negotiation of meaning and information sharing. Fluency is a priority

*The cooperative learning model*: students work in cooperative learning situations and are encouraged to work together on common tasks and to coordinate their efforts to complete tasks. Rewards systems are group oriented rather than individually oriented.

*The process approach*: in writing classes students take part in activities which develop their understanding of writing as a process. Different stages in the writing process (planning, generating ideas, drafting, reviewing, revising, editing) form the focus of teaching.

*The whole-language approach*: language is taught as whole and not through its separate components. Students are taught to read and write naturally with a focus on real communication, authentic texts, and reading and writing for pleasure.

Or rather than drawing on a particular approach or method the teaching model in a program may be based on a coherent set of principles that reflect how teaching and learning should be approached. This is the teaching philosophy of the program and serves as the basis for decisions about classroom methodology. The following statements describe the teaching philosophy supporting a secondary school EFL English program:

- There is a consistent focus throughout on learning English in order to develop practical and functional skills, rather than as an end in itself.
- Students are engaged in practical tasks that relate to real world uses of English.
- Realistic and communicative uses of language are given priority.
- Maximum use is made of pair and group activities where students complete tasks collaboratively.
- There is an appropriate balance between accuracy-focussed and fluency-focussed activities.
- Teachers serve as facilitators of learning rather than as presenters of information.
- Assessment procedures reflect and support a communicative and skill-based orientation to teaching and learning.

- Students develop an awareness of the learning process and their own learning styles, strengths and weaknesses
- Students develop the ability to monitor their own learning progress and ways of setting personal goals for language improvement.

These statements were produced through discussion with teacher trainers, curriculum planners and teachers and served as a reference for materials developers, teacher trainers, and teachers. Articulating a teaching philosophy in this way can help clarify decisions relating to choice of classroom activities, materials, and teacher evaluation. In the case of a teaching model that is based on an existing teaching model such as communicative language teaching, the philosophy and principles of the model are accepted as givens: teachers are expected to be familiar with them and to put the principles into practice.

Unless a teaching model is agreed upon it is difficult to make decisions about what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable teaching practices. At the same time teachers should have the opportunity to teach in ways that reflect their own preferred teaching styles. Teachers teach in different ways. Even though two teachers work towards identical goals they may choose different ways of getting there. Teachers bring to teaching their own personal beliefs and principles and these help account for how they interpret their role in the classroom as well as differences in the way they teach. Teachers' principles are a product of their experience, their training and beliefs. Breen (p. 45) comments:

> Any innovation in classroom practice – from the adoption of a new task or textbook to the implementation of a new curriculum – has to be accommodated within a teacher's own pedagogic principles. Greater awareness of what these are on the part of the designer or curriculum planner and, indeed, the teachers themselves, will facilitate harmony between a particular innovation and the teacher's enacted interpretation of it in the classroom. The opportunity for teachers to reflect upon the evolving relationship between their own beliefs and their practices lie at the heart of curriculum change.

Examples of teachers' principles cited by Breen are:

- Selectively focus on the form of the language
- Selectively focus on vocabulary or meaning
- Enable the learners to use the language/be appropriate
- Address learners' mental processing capacities
- Make the new language familiar and manageable
- Make the learners internalize and remember the new language
- Take account of learners' affective involvement
- Directly address learners' needs or interests
- Monitor learner progress and provide feedback
- Facilitate learner responsibility or autonomy
- Manage the lesson and the group

In any group of teachers there are some principles that are shared as well as those that are held by individual teachers. As teachers plan lessons and teach they draw on a teaching philosophy as well as their personal principles to help them shape and direct their teaching. (Bailey 1996, Richards 1998). Opportunities for teachers to clarify their

teaching principles can help focus on issues concerning choice of teaching methods, activities and materials, the purposes underlying different teaching strategies, and criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of lessons. Leung and Teasdale (1998, p. 20) comment:

> "Clearly there can be effective teaching without teachers making explicit the theories which underlie their practice. However, we would contend that, other things being equal, privileging and developing the intellectual frameworks which inform teaching offers a principled way of conceptualizing teaching as purposeful action."

At a practical level the following decisions are therefore needed in formulating the teaching approach for a program:

- What teaching model or philosophy of teaching should the program reflect?
- What teaching principles are consistent with this model or philosophy?
- What other kinds of principles do teachers hold?
- What are the expected roles of teachers?
- What are the expected roles of learners?
- What is the role of instructional materials?
- What kinds of classroom activities and practices are recommended?

**Maintaining good teaching**

Quality teaching cannot simply be assumed to happen. It results from active ongoing effort on the part of teachers and administrators to ensure that good teaching practices are being maintained. This involves the establishment of a shared commitment to quality teaching and the selection of appropriate measures to bring it about. The following are strategies that address this issue.

*Monitoring*: Information needs to be collected regularly on all aspects of the program to find out how teachers are teaching the course, what is working well or proving difficult, and what issues teachers needs to resolve. Monitoring can take place through formal and informal mechanisms such as group meetings, written reports, classroom visits, and student evaluations.

On the role of meetings, Davidson and Tesh (1997, p. 187) comment:

> What kinds of meetings are necessary in a language program? Certainly, at a minimum, the entire group of teachers and administrators needs to meet at the beginning of the term, at mid-term, and at the end of the term. Other groups and subgroups need to meet more often and for more specific purposes throughout the term. Meetings need to be run so that maximum participation by all employees is assured and so that communication flows in all directions, both vertically and laterally.

*Observation*: Regular observation of teachers by other teachers or supervisors can provide positive feedback on teaching as well as help identify areas that might need attention. Observation may but need not involve evaluation. Peer observation can also be used to enable teachers to share approaches and teaching strategies. Or in observing a colleague a teacher can collect information the colleague is interested in obtaining. This might include information on how students complete a learning activity or the type and

frequency of questions the teacher uses (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Teachers can also make use of self-observation through audio or video recording their lessons and reviewing the recording to see what it tells them about their teaching.

***Identification and resolution of problems***: Timely identification of problems in a program is essential to ensure that small problems do not develop into bigger ones. Good communication systems can help ensure that problems are brought to the attention of teachers or supervisors for timely resolution.

***Shared planning***: Teachers often work in isolation and do not always have the opportunities to benefit from the collective expertise of their colleagues. One way to avoid this is to build in opportunities for collaborative planning such as when teachers work together in pairs or groups on course planning, materials development and lesson planning. During the process of planning, potential problems can often be identified and resolved.

***Documentation and sharing of good practices***: A great deal of excellent teaching goes on in schools but much of it is known only to individual teachers or supervisors. Teachers should be encouraged to report on their positive teaching experiences. For example teachers can write short case accounts of a successful course they taught and can share these with other teachers or post them on the Internet. They can write short articles for an in-house newsletter or teachers' magazine or present ideas at informal lunch meetings. Classes can be video-recorded to provide input to workshops or teacher training sessions.

Meetings or 'mini-conferences' can be arranged in which teaches report on classroom innovations or other activities they wish to share with colleagues. Davidson and Tesh (1997, p. 190) give the following examples:

1. The teacher has given a presentation at a professional conference and can adapt that presentation for an in-service.
2. The teacher has attended a professional conference or workshop and can share what was learned.
3. The teacher has read a current publication in the field and can tell colleagues about it.
4. The teacher has a practical teaching strategy to share.
5. The teacher has developed audio, video, or written materials relevant to the language program curriculum and can provide a demonstration.
6. The teacher has used one of the textbooks on the booklist for the coming semester and can share ideas about what works and what does not work.
7. The teacher would like to lead a discussion concerning a particular curricular or program issue.

***Self-study of the program:*** self-study involves a study of a program's practices and values as part of the process of self-evaluation and review. It is part of the process of demonstrating a commitment to quality and to long-term goals and professional development. "By undertaking self-study, a language program declares itself interested in the assessment of its quality and the outcome of its teaching mission, and committed to the long-term change and professional growth" (Carkin, 1997, p. 56). A self-study should be undertaken every three to five years and involves teachers, administrators, and students in a process of examining all aspects of a school's operations (Kells, 1988).

Guidelines for conducting self-study have been published by TESOL and NAFSA (Marsh, 1994: TESOL, 1986a, 1986b).

**Evaluating teaching**

If a program seeks to provide quality teaching it is essential that teachers' performance is regularly reviewed. This involves the development of an appraisal system. An appraisal system may have several different purposes:

- to reward teachers for good performance
- to help identify needs for further training
- to reinforce the need for continuous staff development
- to help improve teaching
- to provide a basis for contract renewal and promotion
- to demonstrate an interest in teachers' performance and development

The purpose of the appraisal will determine the type of appraisal that is carried out.

*Developing the appraisal system*

An appraisal system is likely to have greater credibility if it represents both teachers' and administrators' views. It should therefore be produced collaboratively and represent all points of view. However any appraisal system needs to recognize that there is no single correct way of teaching. Teachers have different styles of teaching and two teachers may conduct their classes very differently yet both be excellent teachers. Criteria for the recognition of good teaching therefore have to be developed that recognize the complexity of teaching and also the fact that is a uniquely individual activity. In language teaching there are no universally accepted criteria for assessing teacher effectiveness and several different kinds of appraisal approaches are used. Criteria are generally established on an institutional basis drawing on general principles for teacher effectiveness and factors specific to the type of program in which the teachers work. For example candidates taking the UCLES Certificate in English Language teaching to Adults (UCLES, 1998) are assessed during teaching practice on planning and use of materials, classroom teaching skills, and awareness of teaching and learning processes. Brown (1994) contains an evaluation checklist, which includes the following categories: "preparation", "presentation", "execution/methods", "personal characteristics", "teacher/student interaction".

*The focus of appraisal*

While appraisal usually involves observation of a teacher teaching one or more classes, the focus of appraisal may include a number of other aspects of a teacher's work such as:

- lesson plans
- teacher-made classroom materials
- course outlines and handouts
- class assignments
- participation in professional development activities

*Conducting the appraisal*

A teaching appraisal may be carried out by a supervisor, a colleague, the teacher himself or herself, or by students.

- **appraisal by a supervisor**: supervisors often assume the role of appraiser though many teachers find they prefer appraisal to be carried by someone other than a supervisor. The presence of a supervisor in the classroom may inhibit the teacher from performing to his or her best. Such assessments may also be flavored by subjective factors. In addition, if the supervisor is largely an administrator rather than a classroom teacher he or she may not have a good understanding of the classroom situation resulting in misperceptions about different aspects of the lesson. In order to provide some consistency to appraisals checklists are often used.
- **appraisal by a colleague**: peer-appraisal is generally less threatening for a teacher than appraisal by a supervisor and may result in more constructive feedback. A colleague will often have a better understanding of the difficulties a teacher faces and perhaps be able to suggest useful ways of addressing them.
- **self-appraisal:** teachers themselves are often in a good position to assess their own teaching and self-appraisal is perhaps the least threatening form of teacher assessment. Self-appraisal may take a variety of forms:
  **i. lesson reports:** structured descriptions of a lesson with evaluation of each component.
  **ii. teaching journal**: the teacher may keep a regular journal about his or her class, and describe and reflect on different aspects of planning and teaching the course.
  **iii. audio/video recording**: the teacher may record a number of lessons of his/her class or arrange to have someone else record them, review the recordings, and comment on the strengths or weakness of the lessons.
  **iv. student appraisal**: students are in a good position to assess the effectiveness of teaching although the extent to which they are able to do so depends upon the type of feedback instrument they are given. Although students are often critical they usually have a good sense of whether a teacher prepares his or her lesson, teaches relevant content, provides lessons that are engaging, relevant, and at an appropriate level of difficulty. What students may not be able to recognize is how difficult the course (or a particular group of students, due to the personal dynamics of the class and its members) is to teach.

## The Learning Process

Learning is not the mirror image of teaching. The extent to which teaching achieves its goals will be also dependent upon how successfully learners have been considered in the planning and delivery process. The following factors may affect how successfully a course is received by learners.

*understanding of the course*: It is important to ensure that the learners understand the goals of the course, the reason for the way it is organized and taught, and the approaches to learning they will be encouraged to take. It cannot be simply assumed that learners will be positively disposed towards the course, will have the appropriate skills the course demands or that they will share the teacher's understanding of what the goals of the course are. Brindley (1984, p. 95) states:

When learners and teachers meet for the first time, they may bring with them different expectations concerning not only the learning process in general, but also concerning what will be learned in a particular course and how it will be learned. The possibility exists, therefore, for misunderstanding to arise. It is accordingly, of vital importance that, from the beginning of the course, mechanisms for consultation are set up, in order to ensure that the parties involved in the teaching-learning process are aware of each other's expectations. If learners are to become active participants in decision-making regarding their own learning, then it is essential that they know the teacher's position and that they be able to state their own. Teachers, conversely, need to canvass learner's expectations and be able to interpret their statements of need.

***views of learning***: Learners enter a course with their own views of teaching and learning and these may not be identical to those of their teachers. How do they see the roles of teachers and learners? What do they feel about such things as memorization, group work, the importance of grammar and pronunciation? Alcorso and Kalantzis (1985) found that while teachers rated the usefulness of communicative activities highly their learners tended to favor more traditional activities such as grammar exercises, copying written materials, memorizing, and drill work. What roles are learners expected to play during the course? Courses may require a variety of different roles for learners, such as:

- manager of his or her own learning
- independent learner
- needs analyst
- collaborator and team member
- peer tutor

How happy are learners with the roles expected of them? Will they need any special orientation or training in order to carry out these roles effectively?

***learning styles***: Learners' learning styles may be an important factor in the success of teaching and may not necessarily reflect those that teachers recommend. In a study of the learning style of adult ESL students, Willing (1985 cited in Nunan 1988, p. 93) found four different learner types in the population he studied.

*Concrete learners*: these learners preferred learning by games, pictures, films and video, talking in pairs, learning through the use of cassettes and going on excursions.

*Analytical learners*: These learners liked studying grammar, studying English books, studying alone, finding their own mistakes, having problems to work on, learning through reading newspapers.

*Communicative learners*: This group liked to learn by observing and listening to native speakers, talking to friends in English, watching TV in English, using English in shops etc., learning English words by hearing them and learning through conversations.

*Authority-oriented learners*: These students liked the teacher to explain everything, writing everything in a notebook, having their own textbook, learning top read, studying grammar and learning English words by seeing them.

A questionnaire on preferred learning styles, classroom activities and teaching approaches can be used to identify learners' learning style preferences. Where discrepancies are identified between views of teaching and learning on the part of teachers and learners these may have to be addressed through learner training, discussion and orientation to the course.

*Motivation*: It is also important to find out what the learners' motivations are for taking the course. Why are the learners in the course and how will it affect their lives? What do they want from it? Which aspects of it are they most interested in? It may be that learners have very different priorities. For example Brindley (1984, p. 119) cites the following preferences for three learners in an adult ESL class in Australia to show how individual learner choices may differ markedly. In such cases counselling and individualized instruction may be needed.

| In this course I want to: | Ranked Priorities for 3 learners |
|---|---|
| *Understand English grammar better* | 2  3  3 |
| *Write English more fluently and correctly* | 1  7  5 |
| *Understand radio and TV better* | 5  6  6 |
| *Know more about Australian culture* | 3  2  4 |
| *Understand Australians better when they speak to me* | 6  1  1 |
| *Read and understand newspapers better* | 4  4  2 |
| *Communicate better with my workmates* | 10  5  9 |
| *Learn more vocabulary* | 8  10  10 |
| *Learn how to spell better* | 9  8  8 |
| *Learn how to pronounce English better* | 7  9  7 |

*Support*: Support mechanisms provided for learners are another component of course delivery. These include the kinds of feedback learners get about their learning and opportunities that are provided for faster or slower learners. Self-access components might be provided to allow learners to address specific learning needs and interests.

## Conclusions

Language teaching has often been discussed from a relatively narrow perspective, with a focus on teaching methods and techniques. Improvement in language teaching has been linked to the use of better methods of teaching, hence the extensive literature on teaching methods and the preoccupation with the search for best teaching methods that has characterized the history of language teaching for much of the last 100 years. This paper has sought to move the focus beyond methods to the context of teaching itself, and to explore factors in the teaching context that can play a crucial role in determining the success of second or foreign language teaching. In recent years it has been acknowledged that since language teaching normally takes place within an institution of some sort, some of the principles of effective institutional management identified in other kinds of settings can also be applied to language teaching. Hence notions such as "quality management", "strategic planning," "best practice" and "quality assurance" have now entered the terminology of language teaching. In this paper I have examined a number of issues that are fundamental to the effectiveness of language teaching programs, including institutional factors, teacher factors, and the processes of teaching and learning. A better understanding of the role of these processes is essential to the success of second and foreign language teaching programs.

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