



Problems faced by Jus on the ETeMS programme

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1. Introduction

When the nation’s policy makers confirmed that the medium of instruction for Maths and Science would be changed from BM (Bahasa Malaysia) to BI (English Language), the mechanism to bring about this change was triggered off. ELTC (The English Language Teaching Centre) proposed the ETeMS programme whose overall aim is ‘to enhance the English Language skills of Maths and Science teachers to enable them to teach effectively using English as the medium of instruction’.

In essence, the ETeMS programme (Phases1&2) involves 240 hours of instruction delivered through face-to-face interaction, self-instructional packages and an immersion course. For the content, about 30% of the course focused Language for Assessing Information while the remainder 70% focused on Language for Teaching Maths and Science. This was the strategy proposed to address the immediate needs of



MST (Maths and Science teachers) in the whole country and to prepare them in the basic language skills needed to begin teaching in English.

The task of implementing this major programme fell on a group of teachers who are called by the term, 'JU', (Jurulatih Utama). These teachers were selected by the State Education Department to help out in the implementation of ETeMS in all the states in the country. Guidelines for the selection of teachers given by ELTC (English Language Teaching Centre) include teachers who have gone through courses like:

- TESL (UK twinning programme and local universities)
- TST (Teacher Support Teacher)
- SAL (Self Access Learning)
- PETEP (Primary English Teachers' Education Programme)

After one week of intensive training by ELTC, these teachers returned to their respective states to carry out the training. They had to digest the modules given, to prepare teaching aids for their presentations, and to face their course participants for 180 hours for the whole duration of the course.

2. Background

ETeMS training has gone into its second year, and basing on the current education system, there will be at least another 3 years of training to go in preparing MST (Maths & Science Teachers) for the task. However, after completing 2 phases of training, there have been informal feedbacks from JU's regarding their disillusionment whilst carrying out their task. The implications of such a low morale amongst JU's may bring about several serious consequences. The quality of training could be jeopardized for future cohorts of course participants and as a result, it could probably lead to poorly trained MST. This in turn would have a grave impact on all our school going students, who will be the ones responsible for the future development of our country.

From our own personal experience, we would readily agree that when we are motivated, our task gets lighter and our performance gets better. Research has shown that performance and motivation are inextricably linked. E.L.Thorndike, in his famous law of effect, stated that learning is strengthened when it is followed by a 'satisfying state of affairs' – satisfying to the learner, of course. In other words, when a person is motivated, it causes him to behave in a particular way, and if we can motivate someone, it suggests that we can make him or her determined to do something.



Psychologists have often made a distinction between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motives are those that are satisfied by internal reinforcers, and are thus, not dependent on external goals. Extrinsic motives depend on needs that must be satisfied by external reinforcers.

Jerome Bruner, the great cognitive psychologist, is convinced that learning will be far more long-lasting when it is sustained by intrinsic motivation rather than when it is driven by the push of external forces. However, Bruner does admit that extrinsic motivation may be necessary to get the learner to initiate certain actions or to get the learning process started. But once on its way, the process of learning is better nourished and sustained by intrinsic motives.

Bruner's position is quite similar to the Harvard personality theorist, Gordon Allport, who has proposed a theory of motivation called 'functional autonomy'. In this theory, Allport tells us that many human motives arise when a means to an end becomes an end in itself. That is, the route chosen to achieve a goal may itself become a goal. To illustrate, suppose a boy will practise on his violin only if his mother gives him an ice-cream. Playing the violin is thus dependent on the extrinsic reinforcer, the ice-cream. Then, one day, when the boy plays the violin, not for the ice-cream but for the sheer joy of creating beautiful music, the motive for playing the violin comes to function autonomously and is no longer dependent on any external goal.

Much has been written about maximizing the potential in an employee and the need for self development. However, in reality, an employee does not work in a vacuum. The working place is a contributing factor in improving the performance of the employee. The working place here refers to an environment where social interactions and working relations are at work.

Stephen R Covey, in ***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People***, proposes that there are six paradigms of human interaction. For purposes of this discussion, we shall elaborate on three combinations. They are:

1. Win/Lose situation
2. Lose/Lose situation
3. Win/Win situation



First, a win/lose situation occurs when the authoritarian approach is used. It says 'I win, you lose, or I get my way, you don't get yours'. Win/lose people are prone to use position, power, credentials, possessions or personality to get their way.

Second, a lose/lose situation will result when two parties are equally determined to have their own way. Both will become vindictive and want to 'get back' or 'get even'. In the end, both are losers.

Third, a win/win is a frame of mind that seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions. With a win/win solution, all parties will feel good about the decision and feel committed to the action plan.

Although there may be specific situations which require a win/lose paradigm, like winning a match in a competition, Covey is of the opinion that most situations in life are part of an interdependent reality, and thus, a win/win paradigm is the only viable alternative. In short, he claims that interdependence is a higher value than independence.

3. Aims

This paper aims to study the perceptions of a group of JU's towards their task and their concerns regarding their involvement as JU's in their respective states.

More specifically, this paper attempts to find out:

- a) the main areas of concern of JU's,
- b) how the identified concerns can be rectified, and
- c) to what extent the informal feedbacks of frustration and disillusionment are valid.

4. Significance

The findings of this paper may be of relevance to a number of people. The first group will be the officers directly involved in the implementation of ETeMS. These include MOE Division officers from BPGI and PPK, PPD officers, principals, heads of schools and other school administrators. By having an insight into the experiences and thoughts of these JU's, these people will be in a better position to make decisions with greater sensitivity. The findings may also open their eyes to see the crucial supportive role that they can play in their line of duty, the absence of which may be detrimental to the whole chain process of effective implementation.



The paper may also serve as an encouragement to existing JU's, many of whom have felt that their hard work and contribution have not been reciprocated with due appreciation and recognition. Being aware that one isn't alone in handling the ups and downs of being a JU is often the very thing needed to keep one moving on track.

5. Methodology

A group of about 30 JU's were gathered for a 5-day course, *Training of Trainers: Documenting the Training Process*. It was held at Concord Inn, Sepang from 29 September to 3 October 2003. As the course progressed, it was only on the third day that a research area was finally decided upon. As the study was to illicit information from JU's regarding their real life experiences as trainers, it was decided that the method of study would be through informal interviews. For the next 2 days of the course, opportunities were sought out to interview as many as possible of the JU's who were present.

The initial method was to work out likely areas of concerns of JU's and to ask their opinions on them. However, it was found that this strategy was not effective enough to dig out their real concerns. An alternative questioning style was employed. For this, the interviewer merely asked general questions and allowed the JU's to give their personal responses. The interviewer had 3 broad guide-lines in mind, namely:

- a) How did you feel about being appointed as a JU? How do you feel now?
- b) Can you share some of your experiences as a JU? Are there some things that you are particularly pleased/displeased about?
- c) How do you think JU's can be encouraged in their job?

Each interview took about 10-20 minutes and often, it was over dinner, or during sessions when we were given hand-outs to read. Notes were taken and were transcribed as soon as possible to ensure the accuracy of ideas shared. Where possible or in doubt, the interviewer would confer with the particular JU for clarification. In one instance, an interview was done through e-mail, after the course was over.

Due to time constraints, the interviewer only managed to interview about 8 JU's. Another 2 JU's were added to the list and they were interviewed via telephone.

These last 2 JU's were not from the original sample of JU's called for the course. However, they have been JU's ever since ETeMS was introduced.

Certain limitations of the study need to be acknowledged. It needs to be emphasized that the finding reported above may not be generalizable because of the limited sample. All the subjects chosen were participants of a particular course, with differing lengths of experience in ETeMS training and responsibilities held in their respective schools.

6. Analysis of Data

From the interviews, a number of concerns were expressed:

6.1 Initial fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar

For most of the JU's interviewed, being selected to be a JU was met with mixed feelings. There was the fear of the unknown and at the same time, a sense of honour and excitement for having been chosen. Yet still there was one who felt that she wasn't given a choice to decide whether or not she wanted to be one.

For another JU, it was a mystery as to why English teachers were called in to train Maths and Science teachers. Many language teachers would readily admit to a phobia for Maths and Science content. This perception was not his alone for even one school administrator shared his sentiments that 'it was a grave mistake'.

However, most of the JU's felt that after the initial anxiety, they were able to pick up the tricks of the trade as they continued with the training.

6.2 Increased Workload

Most of the JU's confessed that they did not know what was actually in store for them as far as duties were concerned. One said that she did not expect to leave the school so often and to miss so many of her classes. As a result, she had to find time to cover her classes when she got back.

Another felt that although there was initial support from his principal, he seemed to have become weary of his absence from school. Then when he tried to talk to his principal regarding his heavy workload, the latter was still insistent that his school duties should be carried out. As a result of his full workload in school, and heavy involvement in Department projects, ETeMS training had become a bone of contention in his marital life. His wife had begun to complain of his incessant preoccupation with his job.

In another case, a JU tried to explain to her principal that absence from school did not mean less workload, as ETeMS training in fact required much more out of her than her normal routine duties in school, but the principal felt that that was not the issue of concern.

6.3 Trials and tribulations/ Lack of Support

For one JU, when she realized that her principal was not happy with her going of school for training, she made arrangements to conduct the training in her school premises instead, 'so that the school doesn't need to prepare relief for me.' Having gone all out to accommodate to her school needs, she wanted to be left alone to work in peace – 'so don't make snide remarks about us' (referring to principals and colleagues).

Facing snide remarks appears to be one predominant professional hazard of a JU. One reported how his principal sarcastically asked him, 'Bila ETeMS habis?' each time he returned from his training. The uncalled for sarcasm irked him.

One JU in exasperation over the extra pressure on her, felt that ETeMS training was an additional load over all the other duties in school and JU's were not even appreciated for it. She felt that JU's were doing 'charity work' and did not deserved to be penalized.

In another case, a JU felt that she had been penalized for her involvement with ETeMS training. On one occasion, when she applied for a day's leave for a religious event, her principal explained that under normal circumstances, he would have granted such a request easily. However, for her case, because she has been away from school so often, he would have to reconsider her application. Although the leave was finally granted, she was hurt that there was no consideration given for her contribution towards the nation's vision. Instead, the issue of concern was her absence from school.

6.4 Other Concerns

Two JU's voiced their concern over the selection of JU's. One mentioned briefly that working with other JU's with low language proficiency can be a problem. He felt that sometimes course participants would try to test them, and if they passed the test, they would have no problem from them.

Another JU was bolder in suggesting that a more stringent selection of JU's is crucial. He recalled an occasion when he was asked to stand in for a JU in another group and he was embarrassed that the JU's themselves were unsure of their stuff. He felt that incompetent and less proficient JU's should not be selected in order to 'safeguard the image of JU's'.

7. Conclusion and Suggestions

As the ETeMS programme continues to develop, the challenges of being a JU should be heard, recognized and rectified in order that the trainer may be encouraged and strengthened to perform the task well. The study above has highlighted a few areas of adjustment and need of the JU's interviewed.

7.1 Personal Adjustments

Many of the JU's acknowledged their fear and initial sense of helplessness when selected for the task. The first *Training of Facilitators Module* revealed that ELTC has actually foreseen this need, and thus, has prepared them for this adjustment under the topic, 'Winds of Change'. During the initial training, JU's were grouped to discuss quotes such as:

'Conflict and disagreement are inevitable and both are fundamental to the process of change' –Fullan(1991).

'Recognize the subtle tension between the importance of establishing readiness for change and the need to get people to try out new practices' –Sparks (1996).

This could very possibly have helped JU's to overcome their initial wariness of their responsibilities as JU's and subsequently, would have helped them to make the necessary personal adjustment from being a class teacher to a teacher-trainer.

7.2 Adjustments to Increased Workload and Coping with Trials and Tribulations

7.2.1 In a sense, it could be said that no amount of knowledge will ever make a transition totally smooth-going. When the training got started, JU's began to get a real taste of the situation from the unsupportive reaction from principals, school administrators and colleagues. Some JU's learnt that although school administrators have been briefed about ETeMS, most were not ready to support the idea practically by taking JU's extra ETeMS training

into consideration when delegating school duties. It seems that school administrators would go as far as releasing these teachers from school for training, but they were expected to fulfill their full workload.

Bearing in mind the benefits of a win/win paradigm proposed by Stephen Covey, the present situation could probably be transformed into a more productive one if school administrators were able to appreciate JU's contribution and not merely highlight their absence from school. Supportive encouragement goes beyond releasing these teachers; there has to be recognition or affirmation in word and action of the task performed by them. This, in turn, would create a more positive environment which would allow JU's to work under less pressure and stress. In short, sincere understanding from their supervisors may motivate them to give their best, both in the ETeMS training and in school.

7.2.2 More often than not, the trials and tribulations reported by JU's stem from feeling a lack of support and appreciation for the sacrifice they made in their line of duty. Some of them had to make adjustments in their family life, for example, making arrangements for their children when they had to be away from home for training, and coping with guilt feelings of neglecting their own children.

Psychologists have often emphasized the power of motivation. When one is highly motivated, one can be expected to perform productively and effectively. The reverse is also true. A lack of motivation would see lethargy in the execution of tasks and ultimately, an overall decline in productivity. Although many cognitive psychologists are convinced that intrinsic motivation would have more long-lasting effects than extrinsic motivation, they admit that extrinsic motivation may be necessary to initiate certain actions or maintain a certain standard of behavior.

7.2.3 Hence, it would be prudent to find out from JU's how they can be encouraged or motivated in their task. Some felt that so far, all they have are empty promises for lap-tops and for recognition in terms of remuneration or other benefits. They would like to see the promises fulfilled. They would also

appreciate greater support from their school administrators and colleagues for their effort. A few were quick to caution that support was not merely in the reduction of duties, but understanding from them regarding their absence from school. Another felt that it would not be too much to expect some financial reward over and above the critical allowance that is given to all English Language, Maths and Science teachers. Another view was that the whole mobilization of JU's in the state needs to be looked into, especially in the area of selection. It was the experience of some JU's that working with fellow JU's with insufficient competency in the language has proven to be an uphill task.

7.3 An Unexpected Finding

At the end of collecting all the interviews, the interviewer was surprised to find that in spite of the initial fear of the unknown, the coping with extra workload, the taunts received in school, and the challenges faced during training, almost all the JU's were prepared to carry on their task. This seems to suggest that the JU's possess a higher level of motivation than was expected of them. Many of them felt that the training itself was a new experience that was both interesting and fulfilling. They cited the sense of satisfaction in seeing the vast improvement shown by some of their course participants from Phase 1 to Phase 2. Generally there was a feeling that their involvement in ETeMS has enriched their professional life as they too have been retrained in a sense, and are learning something new. As a result, they gained a new-found sense of pride and self-confidence.

However, this finding does not mean that the interests of JU's could therefore be put aside. All the more, in order to sustain this level of motivation and to encourage them further towards optimum productivity, their pleas to be recognized and supported must be heard, and subsequently, necessary steps be taken. Only in an environment where all parties concerned are committed to function on a win/win paradigm, can ETeMS programme harvest her fullest potential from her JU's.



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