

9:30am - 10:00am

Block Y, Room Y301

Invited Speaker

Mr C. K. Wan

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C.K. Wan is the Director of School Development at Lock Tao Secondary School. He is also a Member of the Faculty of Education's School-University Partnership Management Committee at the Hong Kong University and a Member of the Education Bureau's Steering Committee on Study of Extended Learning Activities Conducted in English in Chinese Medium Schools in Hong Kong.

Topic: NSS English Language Education Curriculum and Assessment:
Blind Men and An Elephant!

Abstract

If "know your client" is the basic rule for success in business, then "know your students" is the sine qua non for success in education. As English language educators how well do we know our students in terms of their English abilities?

At present, experienced secondary school teachers are quite confident not only in delivering the existing English Language curriculum effectively but also in predicting the level of achievement or grade of their students in public exams. But, under the New Senior Secondary (NSS) English Language Curriculum, even the most experienced English teachers may not be able to exercise their professional judgment to deliver the new curriculum effectively, let alone help students to achieve the best possible levels in HKDSE.

Much of the new curriculum and modes of assessment are alien to teachers. A host of problems may arise. Teachers have to teach more, and a greater diversity of, senior form students who have lower average abilities in English. With expansion of the senior forms, a lot of less experienced teachers will have to be deployed to take up the challenge. Teachers are stretched to their limits and there are grave concerns for students' performance in HKDSE. Are there any White Knights? Details and progress of a ten-month project organised by the English Language Centre of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University for six secondary schools will be shared in the symposium.

Having set the minimum entrance requirement at Level 3 in HKDSE, are teachers in the tertiary institutions immune from teaching NSS cohorts of lower abilities as well as with a greater diversity of English language level? The *South China Morning Post* reported in January, 2010 that a HKDSE Level 3 can be equal to an F in the HK A-Level, but many local universities in their preparation for 3-3-4 may be spending insufficient resources to address this problem.

Most universities will require the new NSS cohort to make up their one-year deficit acquiring knowledge related to subjects such as Physics, Economics and Mathematics. In addition, they may require the freshman to develop other skills, for example leadership, as well as studies such as general education. Since this leaves only two to three credit

hours for students to learn English language, the inherited shortfall of one year's (S.7) English learning may never be made up.

Let our concerns for quality English learning and teaching be heeded. Otherwise, the importance of English language learning and teaching in tertiary education may be buried quietly under the competing voices of other departments.