INTERACTIONAL ANALYSIS CATEGORIES (FIAC) FOR PEER OBSERVATION TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Abdul Halim Mohamed dan Hisham Dzakiria

The School of Cognitive Science and Education at Universiti Utara Malaysia

Alamat korespondensi: Center of Applied Research in Education, Shcool of Education and Professional Development, University of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ, United Kingdom, e-mail: a.halim@uea.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Observing teachers especially experienced teachers can be a difficult task. Nevertheless, observation is an effective means to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning practice of any course or program. Peer observation is one of the effective ways with relative ease. This paper discusses the findings of a study that involves three ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers at Changlon Secondary School in Kedah Malaysia. This study incorporates the use of Flanders' Interactional Analysis Category (FIAC) for Teacher Support Team (TST) program between Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and the school. The paper begins first by explaining the involvement of the teachers and their feelings about peer observation. This paper then highlights teachers' feelings and perceptions towards FIAC as an alternative tool to observe and improve teaching effectiveness and how its use creates an awareness of the kind of teaching that takes place in their classrooms. The dogma of learner-centred versus teacher-centred teaching was evidently discussed. The paper concludes by providing ways to make the classrooms more learner-centred as opposed to the current practice of the teachers which are more teacher-centred.

Keywords: *interactional analysis categories, observation, teaching and learning, learner-centred, teacher-centred*

INTRODUCTION

In response to the growing development of new competencies and skills that Malaysian teachers need to learn, it is important for them to have sufficient support and training from the school administrators and the Ministry of education. With the current development of teacher education in Malaysia, teachers need to be adequately trained in order to be well-fit into the new demands of society and the nation. Teachers need and require continuous support to perform their teaching effectively in schools. Institutions of higher learning such as Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) have been trying to "get closer" and help schools by providing support through action research collaboration partnerships. The existence of UUM have been vital for the local schools located in the vicinity of the university. The academics of the School of Cognitive Science and Education at UUM have set up an action research team named Teacher Support Team (TST), with the district education office to develop local teachers as active researcher of their own class rooms. One of the goals of this 'partnership' is to increase the rapport between UUM as a research institution and the local

schools through the teacher development programme. It incorporates the action research study that is "a study of a social situation with a view to improve the quality of action within it" (Elliott, 2001: 69). It is a programme that is directed towards helping teachers improve their work in school through mutualism or symbiotic relationships (Altrichter *et. al*, 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

UUM with its TST has been developing its peer observation activities as small scale research projects. The project which receives support from the state District Education Department has been organising many series of workshops for the local school teachers. TST begins by getting all teachers as 'insiders' to .understand what action research is. Teachers at Changlon

Secondary School are then encouraged to discuss issues pertaining to their subjects with academics (lecturers as outsiders) in order to make this collaboration become a mutual beneficial process (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). Teachers's attitudes, knowledge and skills in teaching are shared and examined. This paper provides the findings based on an action research that has involved three secondary school teachers of the same school.

This action research presents a venue for teachers of Changlon Secondary School to learn from one another for ways that can increase students' interest in learning effectively. This partnership between university and schools should have mutual relationships in which both live symbiotically and have "pleasurable, challenging and mutually empowering". Mutualism that exists could be very beneficial and helpful for teachers to focus on present educational issues and problems (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). Moreover, mutualism between "both species enhance their survival, growth and fit-

ness" (Anderson & Herr, 1999 cited in Johnson & Johnson, 2002 : 69). Through constant meetings, school teachers are informed of the latest research findings related to teaching. The district education department (its equivalent of local education agency, LEA) has been trying to motivate teachers to conduct action research that would eventually benefit their students and the teachers themselves. The research practice is "to create new knowledge and understanding of the complex professional worlds in which we (as teachers) work" (Dadds, 2002 : 12). The teachers are encouraged to actively organise groups. It is believed that by holding discussions and debriefings teachers, knowledge can be kept current on the latest development of teaching and its development

There are four goals that this research intends to achieve: (1) to expose teachers of action research in reciprocal Teacher Support Team (TST) university school partnership, (2) to get teachers to "learn by doing" research in their own classroom and its activities, and (3) to reduce the anxiety of teachers through peer observation in order to maintain professionalism.

This research involves three female ec";tdary English as a Second Language (ESL) language teachers (Teacher A, B and C) to collaborate with UUM lecturers (academics) to form a collegium for participating in professional conversation that would be mutually beneficial to one another. The research partnership uses the model that encourages teachers to plan, act, observe, reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This partnership is planned carefully so that the teachers as insiders would not feel intimidated by the presence of lecturers (as outsiders) from University Utara Malaysia.

They are required in this partnership to work together and share their valuable experiences in constant

regular meetings and debriefings to enhance their teaching effectiveness (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). The discussion involves teachers in going through five phases: selecting an area or focus, collecting data, organizing data, analysing and interpreting data and taking action.

The teachers consist of three teachers who are willing to take part in this reciprocal positive partnership. Teacher A is a young trained teacher who has a specialised Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) certificate from a British university where as teacher B is an experienced TESL teacher who graduated locally. Teacher C is a bit different as she is an ESL teacher who does not have TESL certificate. However, she is an experienced teacher who has received her education from English-medium school.

As the action research involves planning, action and the evaluaCj.tion of the result of action, this action research that involves peer observation is documented for others to follow (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1990). The UUM researchers who function as facilitators to the three teachers would conduct meetings and debriefings with the teachers and see what kinds of teaching problems worth researching. Resources and training using certain peer observation methods are also introduced to generate discussions among teachers and university lecturers. In this research practice, teachers are encouraged to sit in a professional conversation in order to "encourage epistemological transformations" (Johnson & Johnson, 2002 : 47). As teachers spend lots of time in schools, they have the potential of gathering a variety of data for analysis (Stocking, 1990).

The teachers are taught to use peer observation *using Flanders' Interactional Analysis Categories* (FIAC) to gather data for discussions. FIAC has ten categories which are to be observed and recorded. The criteria of FIAC are as follows:

Direct Influence
1. acknowledges feelings
2. praises or encourages
3. uses ideas of students
4. asks questions

Direct Influence
5. lectures or orients
6. gives directions
7. criticises or justifies authority

Student Talk
8. student talk - limited
9. student talk - unlimited or initiated
10. silences or confusion

As the Malaysia Ministry of Education demands teachers to change, *action research* such as TST is very useful to motivate teachers to increase their knowledge (Bassey, 1995 : 3). Action research is still not well established in Malaysian schools particularly in the State of Kedah (northern state of Malaysia). As a method of inquiry, TST tries to make teachers aware of the benefits that they can gain by actively engaging in action research (McKernan, 1991). This action research highlights "the essential feature of this approach, which involves the testing out of ideas in practice as a means of improvement in social conditions and increasing knowledge" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988 : 6). Teachers and university lecturers are encouraged to participate in professional conversation and internalise collaborative research culture (Stanulis *et. al*., 2002).

According to Keating *et. al.* (1998), "teachers conducting research in their classrooms can apply theory and research to applied practice; produce information to individual teachers' curriculum and classroom methodologies; utilize valuable data from the source; create a platform to disseminate knowledge to teachers locally, regionally, and nationally; and encourage

teachers to apply problem-solving skills to real situations ".

These partnerships permit teachers and lecturers of UUM to collaborate and produce better performance in their teaching practices. The research which receives strong support from the District Education Office could be carried out as the office also has certain fiscal allotment to conduct in house secondary teacher development programmes. This partnership is fully supported by the district education office as it perceives that teachers would gain benefits inbuilding their professionalism as teachers. In addition, this research activity would help to inculcate positive culture of professional teachers as "the school culture becomes one of the most critical sites of socialisation as teachers struggle to conform or to resist within the cultural context of the school" (Johnson & Johnson, 2002 : 47-48).

The teachers as they involve in action research would benefit tremendously as they know the students they teach and the atmosphere the live to teach in. It gives an opportunity to carry out "development work for their schools ... and broaden their knowledge and their professional competency" (Altrichter *et. al.* 2000). TST as a form of action research is of systematic selfcritical enquiry, school teachers as insiders can learn to take part in professional conversations among themselves (Stenhouse, 1975; Ruddock & Hopkins, 1985; Dadds, 2002). Furthermore, teachers knowledge of pedagogy would be updated as they get themselves involved in the action research. Besides, it is important to highlight that teachers' pedagogy based upon the attainment of clearly defined single instructional objectives within an instructional framework (Hallam & Ireson, 1999 : 84). They need to consider what teaching strategies to use after making careful analysis of their learners, lear-

ning environment and learning activities.

Hallam and Ireson (1999 : 71) cites that "a pedagogy of secondary education may include :

Consideration of the aims of education and the values which underpin teaching;

Knowledge of theories of learning;

Knowledge of different conceptions of teaching;

Knowledge of models of teaching and learning and the dynamic interaction between student characteristics, the characteristics of the learning environment, task demands, the processes of learning and teaching and different kinds of learning;

Understanding of how these can be operationalised in the classroom;

*Knowledge* and *skills* for evaluating practice, research and theory relating to education"

Related to pedagogy are the teaching skills which can be defined as "those micro-behaviours" that the effective teacher constantly exhibits when teaching a class". Teachers should use the opportunity to share their teaching practices by collaborating in a research activity. Amongst the skills stated in McBer's report (2000) include : (1) involving all pupils in the lesson; (2) using differentiation appropriately to challenge all pupils in the class; (3) using a variety of activities or learning methods; (4) applying teaching methods appropriate to the national curriculum objectives; and (5) using a variety of questioning techniques to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding.

The action research as it informs teachers' strengths and weaknesses can certainly improve teachers' pedagogical skills. Teachers' use of teaching methods could be shared and discussed through the mutualism. Instructio-

nal methods can be defined as "ways of helping someone to learn" (Reigeluth, 2001). They need "to actively make these connections between what the learner already knows and the new information" (Morrison *et. al*., 2001 : 124). The research activity would increasingly "generate pedagogic knowledge that illuminates processes and aids us in our understanding of how and why decisions were taken, and their effects on learners" (Pike, 2002 : 30). In addition, this research initiative can be very beneficial by "establishing ways for academics and practitioners to work together more critically" (Johnson and Johnson, 2002 : 80).

This partnerships, if exists, would certainly help teachers under-stand what teaching is all about. It allows teachers to look into and discuss several interconnected aspects related to teaching. Their roles as teachers would "help children towards a critical understanding of the world and cultural environment in which they live" (Goodwyn & Findlay, 1999 : 31) as cited by Pike (2002). Also, as teachers and academics, we could" 'learn as they go' , to develop insights into our context, and to develop understandings of our practice, it promotes incremental social and cultural changes in our teaching and learning" (Johnson & Johnson, 2002 : 80). Pertaining to discussion over teaching, McBer (2000) cites seven factors pertaining to teacher effectiveness as shown in the model below.
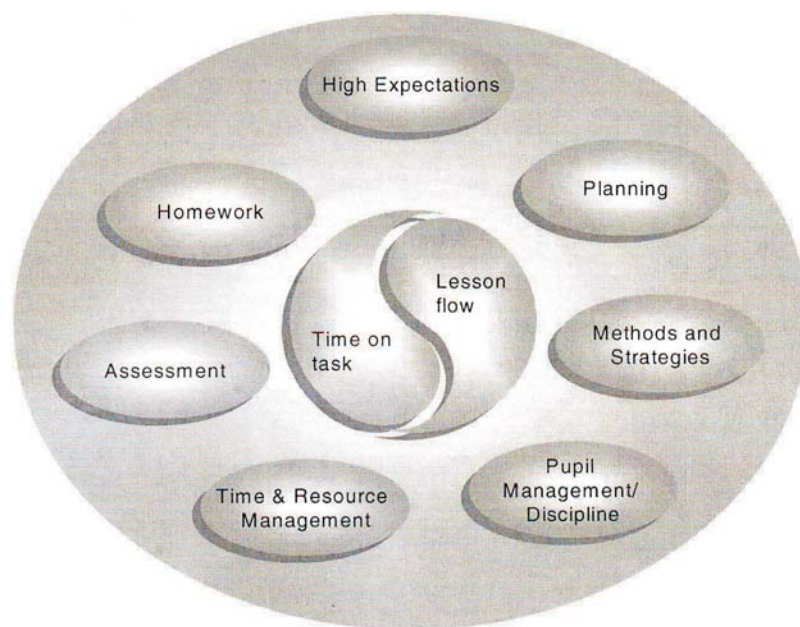
Picture 1. Model of Teaching Effectiveness (McBer, 2000)

The action research as it involves observation of teaching must take into consideration many skills engaged in the teaching process. The group collaboration would give the opportunities for teachers to discuss the appropriate skills that can help them teach effectively in their classrooms. Seven skills such as planning and preparation, lesson presentation, lesson management, classroom climate, discipline, assessing pupils' progress and reflection and evaluation can be used to help teachers function well in schools (Kyriacou, 1998 : 8).

In the research partnership between teachers and lecturers, teachers can tryout different ways of using and applying theories of learning. This is important as the teachers as insiders know their students well and would most likely want to resolve problems.

The teachers' study of their own problems could apply theories and research knowledge to applied practice. They could form a group of teachers as consultants that can provide knowledge and disseminate whatever they learn to teachers at the nearby areas. Teachers through such action research group could encourage applying problem-solving skills to real situations from discussions held among themselves. The teachers can learn to interact with the world and with others when they get involved in collaborative action research (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). It is vital process as action research is "a learning process aimed at contributing both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation ... " (Rapoport, 1970 : 499).

The CRASP model that is developed by Zuber-Skerritt (1992 : 15) provides important framework for action research.),

Critical collaborative enquiry by
Reflective practitioners being
Accountable and making the results of their enquiry public,
Self-evaluating their practice and engaged in
Participative problem-solving and continuing professional development

The teachers would be encouraged to discuss why and how decision about teaching are reached. Such research process requires teachers "to generate pedagogic knowledge that illuminates processes and aids us in our understanding of how and why decision were taken, and their effects on learners" (Pike, 2002 : 30).

The university-school partnerships would symbiotically benefit as they (the teachers and lecturers) hold group discussion. This research tries to improve instruction among teachers though clinical peer observations. As reflective practitioner, this research activity will encourage them to look into

their classrooms and discuss their problems pertaining to teaching and learning performance among students. Action research could improve their teaching in order to get students learn better. Teachers' skills can be improved by reflecting them via reflective discussions. As 'actors' in their own classroom, teachers have the privileges in understanding their students (Kemmis, 1993). From the discussions that are generated in the research activity among the university and the school, transfer of knowledge and skills could occur more frequently and immediate by (Pike, 2002).

Besides teaching, teachers' questioning skills could be very useful to observe. This could also be discussed via discussions. Undeniably, questioning skills are also important to teaching. Kyriacou (1998 : 34 - 35) mentions that reasons for asking questions are: (1) to encourage thought, understanding of ideas, phenomena, procedures and values; (2) to check understanding, knowledge and skills; (3) to gain attention to task, enable teacher to move towards teaching points, as a 'warm up' activity for pupils; (4) to review, revision, recall, reinforcement of recently learnt point, reminder of earlier rocedures; (5) for management, settling down, to stop calling out by pupils, to direct attention to teacher or text to ward of precautions; (6) specifically to teach whole class through pupil answers; (7) to give everyone a chance to answer; (8) to prompt bright pupils to encourage others; (9) to draw in shyer pupils; (10) to probe pupils' knowledge after critical answers, redirect questions to pupils who asked or; (11) to other pupils; and (12) to allow expressions of feelings, views and empathy".

Through the process of reflection in action research activity, teachers would be able to find solutions to their problems and improve learning instruction in their classrooms. The teachers

should use the group discussions before their observation to discuss what teaching and learning areas to focus and what changes or improvement they want to make (Pike, 2002; Elliott, 1991, Altrichter *et. al*., 2000). The teachers involved would get together regularly to decide on what problem areas to research in to their classrooms. While the teachers act as active researchers, the researchers function as facilitators. The function of the researcher as facilitator would try to reduce the anxiety level among teachers when they are to be observed. Teachers should not be intimidated by observations. Instead, they should welcome observation that could bring many advantages to them. By participating in what they are doing and in discussions, teachers' knowledge of current development is updated regularly. Discussions that are regularly conducted would help teachers to collaborate and reflect, learn from each other's experience and document their findings which would be very useful in fulfilling their needs as teachers (Johnson & Johnson, 2002 : 79).

The action research should encourage teachers to be more critical in their analyses of their students performance since it functions as a "systemic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by participants in the inquiry" (McCutcheon & Jung, 1990 : 148). This TST at UUM tries to explore what teachers know about observations and theories of learning and teaching. Teachers are encouraged to work with one another and to collaborate so that they can be critical of each other.

As action research is useful to the profession and development of individual teachers, teachers who are involved in action research would be taught to improve their abilities to analyse and reorganize knowledge as well as to make knowledge communicable (Altrichter *et. al*., 2000). This research

enables lecturers as facilitators to provide teachers with self-reflection of their own teaching practices in order to improve their teaching performance gradually. This research as it intends to improve teaching should be goal-oriented. Eventually, the confidence in teaching would make an impact to personal growth of teachers (Pike, 2000). The teachers academics relationships would establish intimate discussions as this action research would "provide English teachers with research perspectives as well as the methodological tools needed to transform practice and to set their own agenda for change" (Pike, 2002 : 34). This could help teachers to engage into the interplay of their own data and develop concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

METHODS OF STUDY

This practical and deliberative mode of action research conducted is originally aimed at getting teachers to participate in research activities so that teachers could keep abreast of the current development of teaching and learning (McKernan 1991).

In this practice of action research, observation and interviews are used to conduct the research. The language teachers of the school are asked to conduct peer observation using Flander's Interactional Analysis Categories (FIAC) (Flanders,1970). Teachers are to observe one another and analyse the data they get from their observation. The analysis of data is then discussed. Interviews are conducted to find out what benefits and experiences they get by participating in this action research.

Teachers need to conduct a few sessions of discussions on peer observation and later a" encouraged to use Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction (1992) in their peer observation. Instructional events are useful to guide teachers in ensuring that their lessons

are completed (Gagne *et. al.*, 1992; Smith and Ragan,1993). Gagne *et al.* (1992) proposes the nine events of instruction that are vital to produce effective classrooms. They are: (1) Attending - gain learner's attention; (2) Expectancy - inform learner of objectives; (3) Retrieval - recall relevant information and/or skills to working memory or stimulate recall of prior learning; (4) Selective perception - remembering stimulus features, distinctive features; (5) Semantic encoding - provide learning guidance*;* (6) Retrieval and responding - elicit a performance; (7) Reinforcement - provide informative feedback; (8) Cueing retrieval - assess performance; and (9) Generalising - applying learning to a new situation*.*

THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The meetings of the research activity have been very useful to get them to be involved in the discussions. The teachers agreed that *'the discussions were very interesting as there were many areas that they could focus'* When asked about Gagne's nine events of instructions, they thought that *'it is helpful to complete a lesson well.'* The following is the table of the survey of nine events of their classrooms. They were very surprised to see the low percentage of aspects that are important to teaching practice. They expressed that *'the nine events helped them in approaching their teaching more effectively in the future.'* They realised that they *'should be more creative and sensitive in getting students' attention.'* From the observations, they' *can only know how much they informed their students of the objectives of what is to be learned.'* They expressed dismay that *'they can perform better by telling learners of the goals of the lessons.'* They felt that they , *to be more careful in stimulating students' prior knowledge to get them to participate in the classrooms.'* In providing guidance, they felt that *'not much has been done to provide support for the learners.'* One of the teachers said that *'her failure to provide support may have caused students to be left behind in their classrooms.'*

Table 1. Data of Teachers' Use of Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction

Nine events of instruction	Average percentage observed as a whole		
	First observation	Second observation	Third observation
gaining attention	4.2%	3.3%	2.3%
informing learners of the objective	4.4%	3.3%	3.2%
stimulating recall of prior learning	5.3%	5.5%	5.4%
presenting the stimulus	5.5%	5.5%	5.6%
providing learning guidance	4.3%	5.0%	5.1%
eliciting performance	4.5%	4.3%	4.5%
providing feedback	4.2%	4.3%	4.2%
assessing performance	8.7%	7.8%	8.2%
enhancing retention and transfer	2.5%	2.3%	2.4%

They thought that by having nine events of instruction, they*can ensure that their teaching is effective as they provide goals, check students' understanding of previous lesson before they can assess students' performance.*They could clearly notice that they *'have not been doing enough to guide students' learning'.* One of the teachers mentioned that they realised that they *'failed in teaching the student. Before I thought I have good teaching skills but I was wrong.'*When feedback was measured, teachers noticed that they were not giving enough feedback to their learners. The teacher C said that *'I wanted to focus more on the feedback. Students did not know whether they were correct or incorrect in giving answers.'*One teacher said that *'it is noticeable that they (the teachers) spent a lot more time assessing students.'*They admitted that *'they were giving exercises in the classrooms and giving answers to all students'* They discussed in the meetings that *'they should focus on getting students to participate as they have made them passive teachers and students.* Teachers agreed that they '*did not spend a lot of time in enhancing recall or transfer of knowledge.* Looking at the overall results of the nine events, they were very frustrated to find that they were *'very low in getting students attention and enhancing recall and transfer of knowledge'.* They wanted to learn more about ways to get teachers to enhance students' recall of information. One teacher stated clearly that *'enhancing recall is the most important thing in teaching. If teaching did not emphasize recall or transfer, they were just wasting time. Why do we teach if we don't teach student how to retain information taught'.*

Peer observation among the teachers has produced overwhelming support from the teachers. It reinforces the benefits of action research that is 'the development of action-orientated critique has three phrases: theory, enlightenment and action". The teachers commented that *'it provides new environment for us to improve their teaching practice'.* They were very helpful and willing to share their experience as language teachers. The discussions held between UUM lecturers and the teachers were very useful as they could *'share their experiences and methods of teaching* '. It provides a forum to discuss and *'document teaching methods they feel are effective to use to get teachers to make students participate in their classroom.'*They have not had any formal teaching discussions before. They thought by having meetings and discussions, they can be more openminded and share their experiences. They certainly feel that they' *like the discussion and action research as it encourages them to engage into their own teaching classrooms.'* It also gives them *'the chance to hear others and try out other possibilities.'*

Table 2 below depicts the results of teachers*'* observation of their peers. The teachers involved in the research were surprised the kind of teaching that took place when they were observed by their colleagues. They felt that ' *it is embarrassing to find out the kind of indirect influence they have had in their classrooms.* ' They realized that by observation, it is more relaxing to sit down and talk about the ways they could go about in getting students to talk more. They feel that the observation is timely as *'this is important for the development of students'.* All the teachers realize that they have been *'talking a lot more in the language classrooms'.* They did not realize how many confusions and silences that have taken place in their language sessions. They suggest that they *'want to work further to improve the student-teacher talk in the English as a Second language classrooms'.* They indicate

that *'they are serious in getting involved in this action research as it is an oppor-* *tunity to focus their problems at hand.*

Table 2. Data on Teachers' Observations Using FIAC

	Teacher A (TESL certified teacher)		Teacher B (local TESL graduate)		Teacher C (English-medium school experienced teacher)	
Inderect Influence (average)	42%	45%	30%	28%	8%	10%
Direct Influence (average)	31%	30%	38%	43%	57%	60%
Student-Talk (average)	22%	17%	10%	13%	15%	13%
Silences/Confusion	5%	8%	22%	16%	20%	17%

Many past observations that they experienced involved an authority from the Office of Education Department. The teachers had never been involved in peer observation. The peer observation is the first they *'had been involved in peer observation.'* However, all of them felt that they are very positive in helping one another and admitted that *'there was always room for improvement in teaching practice.'* They felt that their peers could be another person who should be responsible for their own teaching skills. It is also indicated that they want *'to increase the number of observation and to even video-record their teaching so that they can analyse what is wrong with their teaching.'* They all agree that they *'can help to improve their language classes by sitting to discuss the problems and increase student talk in the language sessions.'* The teachers were *'a bit surprised with the kinds of discussions that were generated during the sessions ofmeetings and debriefings.'*

This inquiry into their teaching could be done by actively engaging themselves in the action research. Action research is defined as a "systemic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by participants in the inquiry" (McCutcheon and Jung 1990 : 48). They can feel that *'their weaknesses and strengths are explored with other tea-* *chers who participated in the peer observations practice'.* The teachers felt that they *'were encouraged to work with one another and were open-minded about their peers' comments. '*This research practice *'provides the teachers with self-reflection of their own teaching practices and gives them the opportunity to improve their teaching performance gradually.'* The group of teachers felt that *'it is interesting to see teachers discuss more important stuff in the canteen and school meetings.'* They felt that their motivation has been high and felt that' *there is always something new to learn.'*

Cohen and McKeachie (1980) identify ten things that peers could use to comment on their colleagues' teaching. The ten aspects could be: mastery of course content, selection of course content, course organization, appropriateness of course objectives, appropriateness of instructional materials, appropriateness of evaluative devices, appropriateness of methodology used to teach specific content areas, commitment to teaching and concern for student learning, student achievement and support of departmental instructional efforts. By getting involved in the action research, they felt that they *'can easily comment on their peers' teaching skills when they collaborate in the research such this*'. They even mentioned that *'the action research has given them better ways of dealing*

with their problems'. Their self-esteem is protected when they collaborate in this research activity. Elliott (2001 : 37 - 38) cites that "the more teachers value themselves as action researchers, the greater their ability to tolerate losses of self-esteem." He further explains that "the more open teachers are to feedback from other teachers, the greater their ability to self-monitor their classroom practice". Elliott says that "the more able teachers are at selfmonitoring their classroom practice, the more likely they are able to bring about fundamental changes in it."

The teachers' engagement as researchers in this study manifest the importanY of peer " observation. Braskamp and Ory (1994 : 202) cites that it is usefull those "who wish to analyse their own teaching and student learning can benefit from a colleague's observation. Such classroom observations can be flexible and informal." Teachers admitted that they *'like the action research as it gives others the chance of learning from each other, and the most important of all, its empowering and gives a sense of what you do and what to improve in the future'* The teachers collectively agree that *'the action research should be participated by others who want to improve their professionalism.'* They can easily comment on their peers' teaching as it is intended to improve their teaching performance.'

The action research allows them to focus not only the teaching skills but also the students' learning. The teachers collaborate to ensure that they follow good model for teaching students. A lot of aspects of teaching could be examined when teachers involve in the study. According to Biggs (2000: 25), "the critical components may include : (1) The curriculum that we teach; (2) The teaching methods that we use; (3) The assessment procedures that we use, and methods of reporting results; (4) The climate that we cre-

ate in our interactions with students; (5) The institutions al climate, the rules and procedures we have to follow".

Teachers work together as a team to ensure that teaching is improved over time. One of the teachers said that *'teaching is developed gradually, teachers should involve in getting their practice observed.'* Susman and Evered (1978) view a general action research project as a cyclical process comprising five stages: diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluating, and specifying learning. Teachers *'can certainly diagnose their problems by observing others'.* Action research is aimed at contributing both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework" (Rapoport, 1970 : 499 as cited in McKernan, 1991: 4). Therefore, teachers should take advantage of getting others to observe their teaching skills in order to reduce the problems they face when teaching. The teachers *'would like to see more of their peers involved in the action research as they benefit from the sessions held.'* They also rejoiced the ideas of collaboration and network of teachers from other schools. They were enthusiastic as *'it gives the opportunity in learning from one another especially with teachers who teach the same subject.'*

This study is important for teachers to pursue as "learning involves the active construction rather than the passive construction of meaning" (Elliott, 2001:151). Since teaching aims to enable or facilitate the development of pupils' natural powers of understanding, the action research provides the space for teachers to focus on their teaching and learning through a social practice of action research (Elliott, 2001). By engaging in the research activity, teachers can become rese-

archer who would theorise and generalise to theories based on what is found in their classrooms (Yin, 1994).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Action research through peer observation should encourage teachers to focus on their teaching practices. This kind of collaboration is vital as it provides ways for "the academics and the school-based practitioners to work together to develop processes to promote increased critical reflection" (Johnson and Johnson, 2002 : 80). The action research provides a platform for them to discuss issues concerning teaching and learning problems. Action research as it provides forum for discussions should be fully supported by school administrators. Teachers and their peers could collaborate and discuss their teaching problems and get solutions if necessary. Teachers should always be encouraged to discuss their problems in healthy discussions through action research team. TST as it involves commitment must try to monitor teachers' reactions and identify different approaches in making TST more effective support network among teachers. TST through action research would provide a mechanism for better teaching and learning. Teachers as agents of change must be helped to express their problems related to teaching via action research that "enables them to accommodate the current emphasis on literacy within their favoured 'personal growth' version of their subject (Johnson and Johnson, 2002, : 40). Such action research collaboration is very useful as it enables teachers to get informed feedback on their teaching and to have a fruitful forum for constructive discussions among themselves. As a research forum to inculcate "values of collegiality and shared responsibility" (Johnson and Johnson, 2002 : 36), we could see "the flowering of empowered teachers" (Wideen *et. al.*, 1998 : 159 cited in Stanulis et. al., 2002 : 46). TST can further trigger discussion of mutual observation of teaching. Thus, continuous improvement for quality teaching could be achieved through appropriate and conducive as well as active collaboration.

Professionalism among teachers can be brought about "by giving teachers the time and training they need to engage in development of their practice through reflection" (Pike, 2002: 36). Even though "collaborative action research is difficult to initiate and maintain" (Anderson & Herr, 1999 : 80), it should be encouraged among teachers as they can improve their teaching performance based on peer observation. It is vital for us to realise that teachers could appreciate comments if they know or have knowledge on peer observation.

Action research could be very useful for teachers to reflect and discuss their experiences openly with their colleagues. Through the action research process, the teachers would be helping one another to observe their teaching skills. Johnson and Johnson (2002 : 73-74) cite that the they become "partners by:

1. communicating openly;
2. being genuinely humble in acknowledging that they wanted to learn with and from us; treating teachers as fellow researchers whose perspectives and knowledge were valuable; negotiating ways of operating that took account of their needs and our needs;
3. sharing power and prestige; and
4. ensuring that the voice of school-based practitioners was heard in larger forums and in the 'written word' ".

The followings are some guidelines that one can use to encourage peer observation among teachers:

1. Administrators should support peer observations and make it less threatening
2. Training should be given so that teachers are not threatened;
3. Teachers should appoint advisors from local schools or university nearly;
4. Persons leading the peer observation should ensure that observation should be made as an educational learning experience;
5. Teachers should be informed of the observation process;
6. Teachers should be comfortable to choose their peer observer;
7. All observations are to be documented so that they are taken seriously in helping their peers;
8. Discussions should be held constantly so that it does not lose its momentum.

REFERENCES

Altrichter, H., Posch, P. and Somekh, B. (2000) *Teacher Investigate their Work: An Introduction to The Methods of Action Research,* London: Routledge.

Anderson, G. & Herr, K. (1999) The New Paradigm Wars: Is There Room for Rigorous Practitioner Knowledge in Schools and Universities, *Educational Researcher,* 28 (5), pp. 12 - 21,40.

Bassey, M. (1995) *Creating Education through Research,* Newark: Kirklington Moor.

Dadds, M. (2002) Taking Curiosity Seriously: The Role of Awe and Wanda in Research-Based Professionalism, *Educational Action Research,* 10, pp. 9 - 26.

Elliott, J. (2001) *Action Research fro Educational Change,* Milton Keynes: Open University press.

Flanders, N.A (1970) *Analysing Teacher Behaviour,* Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley. (Calhoun, E. (1993) Action research: Three approaches. *Educational Leadership,* 51 (2),6265.

Gagne, R., Briggs, L., & Wager, W. (1992) *Principles of Instructional Design,* Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace.

Goodwyn, A & Findlay, K. (1999) The Cox Models Revisited: English Teachers' Views of Their Subject and The National Curriculum, *English in Education,* 33 (2), pp. 19-31.

Hallam, S. and Ireson, J. (1999) Pedagogy in Secondary School, in Mortimore, P. (ed.), *Understanding Pedagogy and Its Impact on Learning,* London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Johnson, B. & Johnson, K. (2002) Learning from Warthogs and Oxpeckers: Promoting Mutualism in School and University Research Partnerships, *Educational Action Research,* 10, pp. 67 - 82.

Keating, J., Diaz-Greenberg, R., Baldwin, M.,Thousand, J. (1998) A Collaborative Action Research Model for Teacher Preparation Programs. *Journal of Teacher Education* 49 (5) (Nov-Dec, 1998) [online] Available

http://ucerc.edu/teacherresearchJmuhsdar0210-99.html [2002, October 20]

Kemmis, S. (1993) Action research, in Hemmersley, M. (ed.) *Educational Research: (current) issues,* London: Open University Press/Paul Chapman.

Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R., (eds.) (1988) *The Action Research Planner,* Victoria:Deakin University.

Kyriacou, C. (1998) *Effective Teaching Skills,* Cheltenham: Stanley Thomes (Publishers) Ltd.

McBer, H. (2000) *Research into Teacher Effectiveness: A Model of Teacher Effectiveness.*

McCutcheon, G., and Jurg, B., (1990) Alternative Perspectives on Action Research, *Theory into Practice,* 24, 3.

McKernan, J., (1988) *The Countenance of Curriculum Action Research: Traditional, Collaborative and Critical-Emancipatory Conceptions.* Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 3,(34 Spring: 173-200 as cited in McKernan, 1., (1991). Curriculum Action Research. A Handbook of Methods and Resources for the Reflective Practitioner London: Kogan Page.

_____, (1991) *Curriculum Action Research: A Handbook of Methods and Resources for the Reflective Practitioner,* London: Kogan Page

Morrison, G., Ross, S. and Kemp, J. (2001) *Designing Effective Instruction,* New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Pike, M.A. (2002) Action Research for English Teaching: Ideology, Pedagogy and Personal Growth, *Educational Action Research,* 10, pp. 27 - 44.

Rapoport, R.N. (1970) Three Dilemmas in Action Research, *Human Relations*, 23(6), pp. 499513.

Reigeluth, C. M. (2001) *What Are Instructional Strategies and Theories 1,* [online] Available: http://php.indiana.edu/-reigelut/3.linst.htrnl [2001, April, 30].

Ruddock ,J. and Hopkins, D. (1985) *Research as a Basisfor Teaching: Readings from The Work of Lawrence Stenhouse,* London: Heinemann. "Schon, D. A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner.* New York: Basic Books.

Smith, P.L. & Ragan, TJ. (1993) *Instructional Design,* New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Stanulis, R.N., Campbell, P.E. & Hicks, J. (2002) Finding Her Way: A Beginning Teacher's Story of Learning to Honour Her Own Voice in Teaching, *Educational Action Research,* 10, pp. 45 - 65.

Stenhouse, L. (1975) *An Introduction to Curriculum Development,* London: Heinemann.

Stocking, K. (1990) *Letters from Leelanau: Essays on People and Place,* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research, Grounded Theory, Procedures and Techniques,* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Susman G.I. and. Evered, R.D. (1978), An Assessment of the Scientific Merits of Action Research. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 23, December, pp. 582-603.

Wideen, M., Mayer-Smith, 1. & Moon, B. (1998) A Critical Analysis of the Research on Learning to Teach: Making The Case for An Ecological Perspective on Inquiry, *Review of Educational Research,* 68, pp. 130-178.

Yin, R.K. (1994) *Case Study Research: Design & Methods,* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Zuber-Skerrit. (1992)*. Improving Learning and Teaching Through Action Learning and Action Research* [Draft paper for the HERDSA Conference], Australia: University of Queensland.