Language and Development; Teachers in a Changing World

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LANGUAGE AND DEVELOPMENT; TEACHERS IN A CHANGING WORLD. Kenny, Brian & Savage, William (Editors). Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997. GBP. 17.99

This book has been a long time in preparation, but it has been worth the wait. It consists of 22 papers which were first presented at the Asian Institute of Technology Conference on Language Programs in Development Projects, held in Bangkok in 1993.

The papers are divided into three major areas, labeled "Coping with Change: Teaching and Learning in Different Worlds," "Cracking the Code," and "Responding to the Players." Not surprisingly, they focus primarily on conditions in South-East Asia, but there are also contributors from Australia and Canada.

"Coping with Change" explores the problems of introducing ESL programs in countries which have pressing financial and security concerns above the usual infrastructure difficulties of developing economies. The worst case scenario is Cambodia, where education had to be restarted from scratch after the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge. Cambodia, Laos, and Indonesia, however, are now shown to be capable of supporting viable ESL projects, but only through the dedication of team leaders and the professionalism of local staff.

"Cracking the Code" develops this theme, suggesting that local conditions, no matter how daunting, may be turned to advantage. Clayton and Shaw (pp. 151–163) discuss the preparation of a database of companies willing to assist Business Studies students in Ho Chi Minh City, while Kershaw (pp. 164-177) discusses the problems involved in arranging a program of business visits in Papua New Guinea.

"Responding to the Players" takes a longer view, suggesting that any program is likely to fail unless there is a close match between the role expectations of the recipient and the donor. Needs analyses must work from the initial establishment of projects to their ultimate development. From the initiation stage there must be consensus regarding the roles of the major and minor players.

To be fully sustainable, project leaders must pay due attention to the training of local staff and must attempt to ensure that both their materials and methodology are

suitable for local needs. Tickoo (pp. 268–79) criticizes the Bangalore Project (Prabhu 1987) for failing in this respect—basing its methodology on cognitive tasks which may not always have suited the learning patterns of the students.

Finally, Hall (pp. 258–267) makes a plea for sensitive evaluation. Highly-paid visiting experts who jet in and jet out, scattering praise or censure in their wake, and are unlikely to command respect from the teachers in the classroom. This book suggests that teachers' experiences must be documented if language and development are to be understood.

Reference

Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second Language Pedagogy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.