"To Their Fullest Potential": Job Satisfaction and Foreign University Teachers in Thailand

Thomas Hoy

Abstract

Foreign university teachers play an important role in the Thai education system. It would also be fair to say that the vast majority of foreign teachers in Thailand, whatever their particular speciality, are necessarily involved in teaching English as a Foreign Language, whether as a primary or incidental focus. However, little is known about their job satisfaction levels, an important indicator of and factor in their effectiveness as teachers. This research uses a survey developed by Paul Hullah in a Japanese context to assess the job satisfaction levels of a sample of 31 foreign teachers at Thai universities through their perception of their actual labels and activities, on the one hand; and on the other, through what they would ideally like to be labeled as and to be doing. It is clear from the survey that foreign university teachers in Thailand want more engagement in their jobs and better lines of communication at all levels. To enable this, universities and educational policy makers need to redefine the place of foreign teachers within the Thai higher education sector.

INTRODUCTION

There are many thousands of foreign university teachers working in Thailand at present. They represent an important element of the government's strategy to increase Thailand's international competitiveness, particularly, though not exclusively, through increasing the numbers and fluency of those speaking English. It is a general axiom of industrial psychology that a happy worker is a good worker. This is true of education too. On the basis of their survey of educational research on job satisfaction, Hoy and Miskel (1982: p. 124) state that "satisfied educators seem to perform at higher levels than dissatisfied educators". So it is important to ensure that all university teachers are satisfied in the work they do, for two reasons. Firstly, because if they are not happy in their work, the education available at Thailand's universities will not be as good as it could be. Secondly, human happiness and satisfaction are good in themselves.

Foreign teachers and their place in Thailand

To ensure that teachers are happy in their work, we first need to understand who they are, what they do and how they feel about what they are doing. But given the wide disparities in working situations and conditions, little is known, except anecdotally, about how foreign university teachers in Thailand feel about the work they are doing and about the state of their morale and job satisfaction. In fact, foreign teachers in general are conspicuous by their absence in the National Education Reform Act (B.E 2542; 1999) and in the key Ministry of Education document "Road map and

measures for expediting education reform in Thailand" (2005). Section 52 of the National Education Reform Act, which deals with the place of teachers in the education system, states:

> The Ministry shall promote development of a system for teachers and educational personnel, including production and further refinement of this category of personnel, so that teaching will be further enhanced and become a highly respected profession.

This is a praiseworthy aim. However, it becomes apparent later in this document that the reference is only to Thai teachers. In talking about the need for educational reform, the document several times calls on "all Thai people" to pursue this aim and ends with a reference to the "Thai identity cherished by all":

> In carrying out the reform along the line stipulated by the National Education Act, it is incumbent upon all Thai people to undertake these tasks and responsibilities to ensure that all Thais receive continuous lifelong education of quality and are capable of learning and self development to their fullest potential.
>
> The vision of the bright future of Thailand would never be realized unless all Thai people immediately join efforts in reforming education, and aim at further development of the Thai people and Thai society.

> All Thai people are therefore invited to co-operate in carrying out education reform for the benefit of future generations, who will thus become valuable human resources for national development. These efforts will undoubtedly allow Thailand to stand in the international community as a developed nation endowed with honour, dignity, peace and pride in the Thai identity cherished by all. (National Education Reform Act, 1999)

Raising the exclusion of foreign teachers in the context of the Thai Education Reform Act might be seen as churlish. It is Thai education we are talking about, after all. However, I believe that education is something that must be conceived of as giving benefits and placing obligations upon all who participate in it--students, teachers, administrators and the society at large--and this needs to include foreign teachers. Therefore, it is an aim of this paper to address what I would call the invisibility of foreign university teachers in this situation and bring to the fore some of the factors that influence their job satisfaction and hence their opportunities "for development and learning to their fullest potential".

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Most of the research done on job satisfaction among foreign teachers in Thailand has focused on pre-tertiary teachers. A discussion of teacher recruitment in developing countries and the factors that lead to success or failure is found in Armitage and Powell (1997). Nathan Anthony (2001) has written a master's thesis dealing with the influ-

ence of organizational culture and demographics, specifically nationality, on job satisfaction at international schools in Thailand. These sources are useful, but university teachers need to be understood in their particular context.

I could find only one paper investigating the job satisfaction of foreign university teachers. In her master's thesis, Charutat Chandrasurin (2005) used Herzberg's two-factors theory to investigate the relative levels of job satisfaction of Thai lecturers and foreign lecturers in the humanities department of a large Thai public university. Overall, she found that the foreign lecturers were somewhat less satisfied than their Thai colleagues. Chandrasurin surveyed both sets of lecturers on their satisfaction in relation to a number of issues: achievement, recognition from colleagues and superiors, the work itself, work responsibilities, career advancement, salaries, personal development and research opportunities, interpersonal relationships, physical working conditions, status, and the quality of supervision and management. Foreign lecturers were more satisfied than the Thai lecturers in only two categories--physical working conditions and their feeling of personal achievement in the job. Chandrasurin's research proposed several reasons for these lower satisfaction levels which are relevant to this research and which I will discuss later. However, its focus is narrow--one faculty at one university. I want to see what the picture is more generally.

The issue of job satisfaction among foreign university teachers across the whole system has been dealt with in the Japanese context, which has certain similarities to the Thai

context. Both are historically non-colonized Asian countries with a dominant national language, generally fairly low levels of English, and at least perceptually, relatively homogeneous national cultures. Paul Hullah addressed the issue of satisfaction among foreign teachers of English in Japanese universities in two studies, one in 1997 and one in 2006, through the lens of "role perception". Hullah (2006: p. 50) sees a teacher's perception of his or her role as integral to the perception of self. He claims that "Dissatisfaction with one's role implies lack of satisfaction with one's self, a sense of lack of completion, of potential unfulfilled." He wanted to know what teachers believe their role to be, what activities they undertake, to what extent their ideal conception of their role diverges from the work they actually do, and their levels of satisfaction with their current position and role. Hullah noted that in his long experience of teaching at universities in Japan, foreign teachers' role perception had often been marked by confusion and inconsistency. With my seven years of teaching experience at a Thai university, these remarks resonated with me so I asked Dr Hullah for permission to slightly modify for use in Thailand the survey instrument he had developed to test role perception in Japan. The survey is self-explanatory and it is reproduced as an appendix. We intend to compare our results in a later paper and believe that this comparison will enrich the picture in both countries and further isolate factors bearing on foreign university teachers' job satisfaction.

The sample

The sample was a convenience sample. In December 2007, I gave out several survey forms to colleagues by hand and by email and asked them to distribute them to their colleagues and return them to me either personally or by email. By the end of January, I had received 33 replies. The questionnaire is reproduced in the appendix.

The sample was not large but it did have some variation, which indicates its potential for representing many views. The replies came from six different universities, namely Mahidol, Chulalongkorn, Prince of Songkhla, King Mongkut's University of Technology, Thonburi, Mahanakorn University, and Dhurakij Pundit University. This is a quite good range of universities, encompassing the public and private sector, universities located in central Bangkok, Bangkok's neighbouring provinces and more distant provinces, large and small universities, and more or less well-known and obscure universities.

There were some problems, it seems, with the understanding of the form, with a somewhat high rate of missing or invalid answers in several categories. This was particularly so on the question of part-time/full-time status. Nevertheless, of the 20 who answered this question, only one claimed part-time status so it is probably fair to assume the overwhelming majority were full-time teachers. There was a wide spread of job titles with only one person not responding. Just over half claimed to be in the lowest rung of the profession as teachers or instructors; one-third were a step

up as lecturers; there were two assistant professors, two associate professors, and one who claimed the status of professor. Two thirds worked at public universities and the rest at private universities. There were five non-responses to the question about years working in Thailand and six to the question about total years working at tertiary level. Four of the respondents had worked for more than 15 years in Thailand and six had worked for more than 15 years in total. Five had worked 7-10 years in Thailand and six had worked 7-10 years in total. About a quarter had worked 3-6 years in Thailand and three respondents had worked 3-6 years in total in tertiary institutions. A third of the sample had worked 0-2 years in Thailand and eight of these respondents most likely would have begun their tertiary teaching in Thailand itself, claiming only 0-2 years total tertiary work experience. However, on reflection, these responses should not be interpreted with complete confidence; the question was intended to ask about years spent working at universities but a respondent might reasonably interpret it as a question about years spent at a tertiary institution i.e. as a student and as a teacher. In any future study, these problems in the design of the questionnaire would need to be addressed.

The sample had a wide range of ages; a quarter were over 55, another quarter from 44-55, nearly 40 percent 31-44, but just two respondents were under 30. Four of the respondents indicated that they were female, four did not reply to this question and the rest were male.

RESULTS

Question 1 asked what label best described the work they did in their actual situation--in reality--and in their ideal situation--the situation which they would ideally like to be in. Four labels were given in the questionnaire: researcher/academic, language instructor, administrator, and student counsellor/adviser. The respondents were asked to mark a number on a scale from 1 to 6 to indicate the extent to which these labels applied to them in both their actual and ideal situations, with 1 indicating "not at all" and 6 indicating "very much". They were also asked to specify any other labels that they would like to use to describe their situation. It was clear from the responses that this set of questions caused difficulties for some respondents. The intention was that the respondents answer to their ideal and actual situation with regard to all four labels given, but seven answered with respect to only one label, presumably thinking they had been asked which label best described them. One of the respondents explicitly commented that she did not quite understand the question. So there were quite a few missing answers in this section.

For the first label, "researcher/academic", there were 28 responses for the actual situation with a mean of 2.82. With the same number of responses, this rose quite a lot to 4.21 for the ideal situation. A perusal of the responses also showed that many of those who had claimed higher job status as professors and lecturers had more or less equivalent answers to the ideal and actual situations meaning that the distance between the actual and ideal situation was even greater for the respondents who were instructor/teachers. This can be

seen by the fact that the most common response was 1 for the actual situation and 5 for the ideal situation. In total, ten respondents gave their actual and ideal situations the same score. Significantly, not one respondent indicated a desire to be labeled as less of a researcher/academic.

For the next label, "language instructor/general English teacher", there were 31 responses, with a very high mean of 5.03. A very large majority described their actual situation as "language instructor/general English teacher". Only one respondent claimed an actual (and ideal) situation of not being a language instructor at all. For the ideal situation, the mean slipped somewhat to 4.54. For 22 of the respondents, their actual situation corresponded exactly to their ideal situation. However, only one respondent wanted to describe himself as more of a language instructor than he actually perceived himself to be. Seven responded in the other direction.

For the "administrator" label, there were 26 responses to both the ideal and actual labels. The mean for actual duties as an administrator was 2.34, which rose slightly to 2.73 for the ideal label. Fifteen of the responses had identical scores for both actual and ideal situations. There was a mixture of responses in both directions, seven wanting more administrative responsibilities and four wanting fewer.

For actual and ideal duties as a "student counsellor/adviser", there were 26 responses with means of 2.50 and 3.23 respectively, a fairly substantial distance between the actual and the ideal. Only one respondent wanted to participate less in this type of work. The rest were satisfied

with the status quo or wanted to do more work in student counseling.

Four respondents identified with other labels, three as thesis supervisors and one as an editor. In all of these except one, the actual and the ideal coincided. One respondent gave "1" or "not at all" as the actual label, but "6" or "very much" as the ideal label for thesis supervision.

Table 1. Results for 'label' section

	Actual (Mean, Standard deviation)	Ideal (Mean, Standard deviation)
1. Researcher/Academic	2.82, 1.59	4.21,1.69
2. Lang. Inst/Gen. Eng Teacher	5.03, 1.61	4.54, 1.57
3. Administrator	2.34, 1.44	2.73, 1.61
4. Student Counsellor/ Advisor	2.50, 1.60	3.23,1.66

Question 2 asked respondents to describe their actual and ideal situations in relation to a number of situations by choosing a number on scale ranging from 1 or "not at all" to 6 or "very much". There were only one or two missing responses to most of these questions. One response noted only the actual situations, revealing in a note that she did not understand how to answer the question on ideal situations. On "administrative decisions", the mean score describing the actual activity was 2.29. This rose sharply to 3.70 as a description of the ideal situation. Only two respondents wanted to be less involved with administrative decisions; the rest were

satisfied with their current activity or wanted to make more decisions. This was probably more pronounced among those who had identified themselves as instructor/teachers; thirteen wanted more involvement.

On formal exchange of information/ideas with staff, the mean rose very substantially, from 3.28 for the actual situation to 5.09 for the ideal situation. No-one wanted less of this type of exchange. Five respondents wanted the same level of formal exchange, but we need to note that all of these responses described the actual level of formal exchange as very high, at 5 or 6, so in these cases the correspondence between the reality and the ideal was predicated on a perception of very high levels of formal exchange already existing.

For the complementary question about informal exchange of information/ideas with staff, there were similar figures. The mean for the actual activity, which was already quite high at 4.12, rose to 5.29 for the ideal activity. Again, no-one wanted less informal exchange; and where there was a correspondence between the actual and the ideal, the actual level of informal exchange was already high, at 5 or 6 in all but one case.

On the question of social interaction with staff, the mean was 3.03 for the actual situation, with a fairly substantial rise to 3.81 for the ideal situation. There was a diversity of responses here; the full range of 1 to 6 was used in both questions.

There was less desire for social interaction with students. The mean for the actual activity was low, at 2.41, and it rose only slightly, to 2.78, for the ideal activity. Again the responses were diverse with the full range recorded in both questions.

The mean score for the actual activity of syllabus development for the teacher's own courses at a high 4.28 rose quite a lot to 5.19. One of the lecturers wanted less of this activity, from an actual 6 to an ideal 5. Eight of those who claimed positions above language instructor had actual and ideal activities which coincided; for four of those with higher positions there was significant dissatisfaction. The sole professor scored a 1 or "not at all" in the actual activity, and ideally wanted 6, a very high degree of involvement. About two thirds of the instructor/teachers wanted more involvement.

For general curriculum planning and design, the mean rose significantly, from 2.93 to 4.39. The same discrepancies were apparent as in the previous question; eight of those with higher positions were satisfied but three of the four with higher positions wanted significantly more involvement in curriculum planning; one wanted less involvement. More than two thirds of the instructor/teachers wanted more involvement; the rest were satisfied with what they were doing in this area.

For thesis supervision, the rise was high from 2.06 to 3.58. It was interesting that six of those with higher positions were quite dissatisfied with their lack of involvement in this activity; one wanted slightly less involvement and six

were satisfied with the situation. Again, about two thirds of those who identified themselves as instructor/teachers wanted more involvement while the rest were happy with the current situation.

For test development, the mean was 3.65, which rose to 4.22. Four of those with higher positions wanted less involvement, six were satisfied and two wanted more involvement. Half of the instructor/teachers wanted more involvement; the rest were happy with things as they stood, while one wanted less involvement in this area.

Several other activities were mentioned by the respondents – editing, public relations, organizing remedial classes, and publishing an in-house journal.

Table 2. Results for 'activity' section

	Actual (Mean, Standard deviation)	Ideal (Mean, Standard deviation)
1. Administrative decisions	2.29, 1.38	3.70, 1.62
2. Formal staff exchange	3.28,1.26	5.09, 0.82
3. Informal staff exchange	4.12, 1.23	5.29, 0.68
4. Social staff interaction	3.03, 1.31	3.81, 1.15
5. Social student interaction	2.41, 1.32	2.78, 1.43
6. Developing curricula	4.28, 1.67	5.19, 0.90
7. Programme planning	2.93, 1.65	4.39, 1.48
8. Formal academic supervision	2.06, 1.77	3.58, 1.86
9. Test development	3.65, 1.77	4.22, 1.48

Question 3 asked respondents to indicate on a scale of 1 indicating "disagree" to 6 indicating "agree" the level of their concurrence with a number of statements. All parts of the question were answered by all respondents. To gain an idea of the difference between the perceptions of those in higher and lower positions, I also checked the mean scores separately for the group of instructors/teachers.

The first statement, "My skills are appropriately used in my current position", had a mean score of 4.06, indicating slightly more agreement than disagreement with the proposition. The mean for the teachers was not substantially different at 4.23.

The mean was 3.27 for the statement "My opinions are not taken seriously by my employers", about midway between the two extremes, but tending to disagreement with the statement. Again, there was only a small difference at 2.92 for the instructor/teachers.

The mean for the statement "My position meets my preconception of it" was 3.97. The teachers were slightly more negative about this proposition, at a mean of 3.46. One respondent replied that he was unable to answer the question because he had no preconception of the position at all when he took it.

For the statement "I am not a valued member of staff", the mean was on the disagree side of the ledger, at 2.58, and the teacher/instructor mean was almost exactly the same, at 2.54.

For the statement "I am optimistic about my future career at this institution", the mean was 3.67. Again, there was little difference between the two groups, with the teacher / instructor mean at 3.46.

For the statement "I am as enthusiastic about my work now as I was when I arrived here", the mean was fairly positive, at 4.18. The teacher/instructor group was similar, at 4.00.

For the statement "I am content with my present position", the mean was quite high, at 4.26, and little different among the teacher/instructor group, at 4.08.

The statement "My qualifications are not directly relevant to my current position" had a mean score of 3.09. Again there was little difference, with the mean of the instructor/teachers at 2.92

The statement "I should be paid more for the work I do" received a mean score indicating very high but not overwhelmingly high agreement, at 4.51. Of all these questions, however, this one did reveal some difference between the two groups. The instructor/teachers had a mean of only 2.92, indicating that those in the higher positions were much more dissatisfied with their pay than the overall mean suggests.

Given that most teachers wanted to increase their levels of activity, this score may indicate a feeling that compensation is adequate for the current low levels of activity. For those with higher positions, it could indicate dissatisfaction with

the lack of reward for increased responsibilities and greater experience. (One respondent made a point by going off the scale at "7"; I marked it as "6". But, it is clear that there is a great deal of confusion and arbitrariness about promotions and pay rises. When I received a promotion to the level of assistant professor at my former university, my faculty granted me the increment that a Thai professor would receive for the same promotion. However, a colleague in a different faculty at the same university, who was initially employed under the same contractual terms as I was, received the same promotion but without the corresponding pay increase that he was expecting. His faculty justified this by saying that, as a foreign teacher, he was already receiving a higher rate of pay than his Thai colleagues. Needless to say, this has not increased his level of job satisfaction.)

The statement "I have not benefitted professionally from my work in Thailand" received a mean score of 2.88 on the disagree side of the ledger. Again, there was little difference with the instructor/teacher mean at 2.77.

Table 3. Results for 'job satisfaction' section

	Overall mean and standard deviation	Instructor/teacher mean
1. My skills are appropriately used in my current position.	4.06, 1.50	4.23
2. My opinions are not taken seriously by my employers.	3.27, 1.74	2.92
3. My position meets my preconceptions of it.	3.97, 1.33	3.46
4. I am not a valued member of staff.	2.58, 1.52	2.54
5. I am optimistic about my future career at this institution.	3.67, 1.24	3.46
6. I am as enthusiastic about my work now as I was when I arrived here.	4.18. 1.63	4.00
7. I am content with my present position.	4.26, 1.39	4.08
8. My qualifications are not directly relevant to my current position.	3.09, 1.65	2.92
9. I should be paid more for the work I do.	4.51, 1.54	2.92
10. I have not benefitted professionally as a result of my work in Thailand.	2.88, 1.78	2.77

DISCUSSION

While bearing in mind that this is quite a small sample, there were some indications of what foreign teachers in Thai universities think about their situation with regard to their satisfaction with the job they are doing and the situation they are in.

Question 1 revealed that the sample indicated strongly that they would like to broaden their job profile. The overwhelming majority of the sample saw themselves as language instructors, and while they wanted to be seen as doing only slightly less of this type of work, they overwhelmingly wanted to become more engaged in the work of "academic/researcher". They also wanted to a lesser extent to become more involved as administrators and student counsellors.

The respondents wanted to engage more in every activity listed in Question 2, indicating a feeling that their talents were under-utilized. Most emphatically, the sample wanted better lines of both formal and informal communication with colleagues and superiors. Although Question 1 revealed that they ideally did not want to take up administrative roles very much more, they did want a much greater level of involvement in administrative decisions. They also wanted much greater involvement in syllabus planning and thesis supervision, and to a lesser extent, more involvement in curriculum planning and test development. All of these, I think, could be taken to reflect the desire to adopt the role of "academic/researcher" that we saw expressed in Question 1.

On the whole, Question 3 indicated that foreign staff were generally somewhat more satisfied than dissatisfied, with means indicating more positive than negative feelings on the questions of the appropriate use of skills, opinions being taken seriously by employers, the position meeting their preconceptions, levels of enthusiasm about their job, their level of contentedness with their current position, and having benefitted professionally from their employment in Thailand. However, the score was lower for the question about the appropriateness of their qualifications for their present position. There was a strong feeling, which, interestingly, was much more pronounced among those with higher positions, that the pay for their work was lower than it should be. It seems clear that experienced teachers do not believe that they are being adequately rewarded.

This survey did not address the qualifications or ability of the staff involved in the survey to do the jobs that they wanted to do. This is something universities in Thailand would have to address if they were to adopt any of the recommendations made here. But if we take the survey on face value, there are many things that universities and policy makers might think about to enhance the satisfaction levels of foreign staff. These recommendations would, however, have ramifications in many areas that would have to be dealt with not just by the universities and foreign staff themselves, but also by policy makers in the areas of immigration and labour law.

Universities, if they are to do the right thing by their foreign staff, should not adopt the fallback position that these

are political matters outside their control. Universities are political actors in many areas and they need to push policy makers in this direction.

There are policies which work against the desire of foreign staff to engage in academic and research work. Most are employed on one-year contracts which work against the development of long-term research plans. Furthermore, work permits are normally granted for only one year. Several of the samples indicated that the participants had been employed at Thai universities for quite long periods of time, but this is likely to have been on the basis of short-term contracts. Additionally, job descriptions for foreign staff are often ambiguous. In the department in which I used to work, the foreign staff were employed in response to advertisements for "visiting professors", a term which normally indicates an academic and research role. However, the actual description in the government documents is "foreign expert", which indicates a much more mechanistic knowledge transfer role rather than the knowledge-creation role of an academic.

Furthermore, there are institutional restrictions on research initiated by foreign staff. While pursuing this research, I thought it might be a good idea to enlist the university's help in contacting all foreign staff at my university in distributing and collecting the survey. While my immediate superior initially welcomed this plan, I was later presented with a document outlining the requirements for foreigners to undertake research in Thailand (Regulations on the Permission for Foreign Researchers to Conduct Research in Thailand, B.E.2550). Consequently, my extended research plan was

stymied by my unwillingness at the time to go through the stipulated procedures for what was seen as "foreign" research – this despite the fact that I was employed at a Thai university. These procedures would have required the posting of substantial bonds and the engagement of Thai collaborators in the research as equal partners. Just to be clear, I have no problem with working with Thai researchers. But for what I had planned as a small-scale individual research project, the procedures seemed too burdensome.

These policy requirements are probably well-motivated – they seem to have been put in place to prevent foreign researchers in burgeoning areas, such as the medical use of Thai herbs, from plundering local knowledge, and also to ensure that foreign research projects help to train Thai researchers. Nevertheless, my research was, I think unwittingly, caught in this trap too. It also had the effect of making me feel rather alienated--an "alien", in immigration department speak--from the place where I had worked for several years. (In fact, many of the features of the employment of foreign teachers in Thailand--short-term contracts and few opportunities to gain tenure or promotion--are similar to those in Japan, which Hall (1998) has trenchantly criticized as an "intellectual closed shop".)

The one-year contract may play a part too in the dissatisfaction with their levels of pay of those in higher positions, who mostly had been in Thailand for some time, because it essentially means that a foreign employee is starting with a clean slate every year; there is usually no formal recognition of experience and no corresponding

incremental salary increases. Foreign staff also expressed a desire to participate more in administrative decisions and in thesis supervision. Involving foreign staff more in these areas would improve levels of job satisfaction in a number of ways. It would increase formal and informal communication between both staff and students, increase intrinsic satisfaction with the job, and it would also mitigate concerns about pay levels, because serving on some administrative committees and on thesis committees attracts extra pay and allowances. Chandrasurin echoes these concerns. She points to the problem of "low salaries, no possibility for promotion, one-year employment contracts, no pension or health care benefits" (p. 46). Universities and policy makers need to address these concerns jointly.

Problems in formal and informal communication between staff are no doubt exacerbated by language problems. This needs to be addressed by both foreign staff and the universities. Speaking anecdotally, a lot of foreign teachers would like to have regular minuted formal meetings instituted in their work units. The universities should ensure that there are clear lines of communication on policy and administrative matters and that where possible the lines of communication involve both English and Thai languages and other languages that foreign staff might use. Foreign staff should learn Thai and the universities should help them with this by providing free courses and orientation programs in Thai language and culture.

Admittedly, there have been attempts by the Thai authorities to institutionalize programs that are ostensibly

designed to help teachers but these have not been well-received or well-conceived. There is concern among foreign school teachers in Thailand at the moment because a compulsory course in Thai educational values and culture has been introduced. Perhaps this is not a bad thing in principle. However, it is the teachers who will have to pay for it, and there is concern over whether this is simply a spurious money-making venture. The blogger Red and White (2008) has a scathingly critical account of the course which is a fairly typical response. At the moment, this course has not been made mandatory for university teachers as it apparently has for school teachers.

Chandrasurin also notes the communication problem. The foreign teachers in her study wanted to ameliorate this and at the same time achieve personal and academic growth through workshops, seminars and orientation programmes. Training such as this would also benefit the university in terms of better teaching and research. Longer term contracts and academic tenure would also help here; people would feel that their investment of time and energy would be more worthwhile if they had a sense of security and an ongoing commitment from their employer. Also, if staff turnover were lowered by longer contracts, foreign staff would be perhaps more easily able to establish contacts and channels of communication. I think that the problem is also exacerbated by the fact that foreign staff are outside the system, particularly with regard to the short-term contracts. They need to be brought as much as possible inside the system. Foreign staff should be made to feel that that they are a real and important part of the university and that they have a voice in it.

There is no guarantee that a desire to become involved in research and academic work indicates a capacity to do it successfully. Many of the teachers in the survey were quite inexperienced, and the survey did not enquire as to their qualifications. However, research is part of the *raison d'être* of a university, and at present the system actively dissuades foreign staff from becoming involved in research. In general, involvement in research has many spin-off benefits; teachers gain a feeling of value, new ideas for the classroom, new techniques, and a greater enthusiasm for and involvement in their work.

The process of research is also a way of increasing communication within and beyond a particular workplace. Foreign staff should be involved in research projects and rewarded for successful research. Small-scale inexpensive research, such as action research, should be emphasized, particularly for those who are inexperienced researchers. Chandrasurin's cohort of foreign teachers also indicated their desire for greater recognition as academics; they wanted more independence in preparing content and courses and were more dissatisfied than the Thai teachers regarding their lack of research opportunities (pp. 38-39).

CONCLUSION

In summary, this is a small-scale research project that gives merely a few pointers to possibilities of increasing foreign teacher satisfaction. As I have pointed out, there are problems with the questionnaire design and with the sample size. The research is by no means conclusive; follow-up research is needed. I think it is a research process that needs

to be driven by both Thai researchers and foreign teachers for the truest and most comprehensive picture to emerge. But despite its faults, this survey does at least partly confirm an impression that many colleagues and I have of a pent-up and often frustrated energy that foreign university teachers in Thailand have and are seeking an outlet for. It seems to me that foreign teachers are clearly seeking more engagement in and ownership of their jobs. This is something that Thai universities should welcome and facilitate.

References

Armitage, K. and Powell, L. (1997). A Re-examination of Expatriate Recruitment for Education in Developing Countries. *International Journal of Education.* 16 (6). 514-517.

Anthony, N.A. (2001). Influence of Demographic Composition, Organizational Culture and Work Processes on Job Satisfaction of International Schools' Teachers in Bangkok. Master's Thesis. Bangkok : Assumption University.

Chandrasurin, C. (2005). A Comparative Study of Job Satisfaction between Thai and Foreign Lecturers in the Faculty of Humanities at Srinakharinwirot University. Master's Thesis. Bangkok : Srinakharinwirot University.

Hall, I.P. (1998). *Cartels of the Mind: Japan's Intellectual Closed Shop.* New York : W.W. Norton.

Hoy, W. K and Miskel, C.G. (1987). *Educational Administration: Theory, Research and Practice.* New York : Random House.

Hullah, P. (2006). Foreign Tertiary EFL Teachers' Role Perceptions. *JALT2005 Conference Proceedings.* Tokyo : JALT, 2006. 50-60.

National Research Council of Thailand. (B.E.2550; 2007). Regulations on the Permission for Foreign Researchers to Conduct Research in Thailand. Retrieved September 20, 2008. Web site: http://www.nrct-foreignresearcher.org/index.php?lang=th&mod=forms&op=regulations_en.

Office of the Permanent Secretary for Education, Ministry of Education. (2005). Road Map and Measures for Expediting Education Reform in Thailand. Retrieved September 23, 2008 from http://www.moe.go.th/icpmoe/Other/Report/roadmap.pdf.

Thai Ministry of Education. (1999). National Education Reform Act. Retrieved September 23, 2008. Web site: http://www.moe.go.th/English/eduact.htm.

Red and White. (2008). The Thai Culture Course: how to Scam, Exploit and Demoralize Foreign Teachers. (2008). Retrieved September 10, 2008. Web site: http://reallifethailand.blogspot.com/2008/06/thai-culture-course-how-to-scam-exploit.html.

Appendix

Please circle the appropriate response to the following questions:

Title: Professor Associate Prof. Assistant Prof. Lecturer Instructor/Teacher

Part-time/Full-time

Type of University:

Public (National) Private (inc. International College)

Years at Tertiary level (Thailand):

0-2 3-6 7-10 10-15 Over 15

Age: Under 30 31-44 45-55 Over 55

Years at Tertiary level (total):

0-2 3-6 7-10 10-15 Over 15

Sex: Woman Man

1. **To what extent do the following labels apply to your current position?**

ACTUAL SITUATION Not at all Very much	LABEL	IDEAL SITUATION Not at all Very much
1 2 3 4 5 6	1. Researcher/Academic	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	2. Language Instructor/ General English Teacher	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	3. Administrator	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	4. Student Counsellor/Advisor	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	5. Other (specify)	1 2 3 4 5 6

2. **To what extent are you involved in the following activities as part of your job?**

ACTUAL SITUATION Not at all Very much	ACTIVITY	IDEAL SITUATION Not at all Very much
1 2 3 4 5 6	1. Administrative decisions	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	2. Formal exchange of information/ideas with staff	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	3. Informal exchange of information/ideas with staff	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	4. Social interaction with other staff	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	5. Social interaction with students	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	6. Developing syllabuses for my own courses	1 2 3 4 5 6

ACTUAL SITUATION Not at all Very much	ACTIVITY	IDEAL SITUATION Not at all Very much
1 2 3 4 5 6	7. General curriculum planning and design	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	8. Formal student academic supervision (thesis)	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	9. Test development	1 2 3 4 5 6
1 2 3 4 5 6	10. Other (specify)	1 2 3 4 5 6

3. Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each of the following statements:

	Disagree Agree
1. My skills are appropriately used in my current position.	1 2 3 4 5 6
2. My opinions are not taken seriously by my employers.	1 2 3 4 5 6
3. My position meets my preconceptions of it.	1 2 3 4 5 6
4. I am not a valued member of staff.	1 2 3 4 5 6
5. I am optimistic about my future career at this institution.	1 2 3 4 5 6
6. I am as enthusiastic about my work now as I was when I arrived here.	1 2 3 4 5 6
7. I am content with my present position.	1 2 3 4 5 6
8. My qualifications are not directly relevant to my current position.	1 2 3 4 5 6
9. I should be paid more for the work I do.	1 2 3 4 5 6
10. I have not benefitted professionally as a result of my work in Thailand.	1 2 3 4 5 6

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.