

A Faulty Ivory Tower: Reflections on Directing the ELP from 2006 to 2012

Bill Harshbarger
English for Liberal Arts Program
International Christian University

The period from 2006 to 2012 marked a turbulent and difficult time for the English Language Program (ELP) at International Christian University (ICU). This paper offers the Program Director's analysis of the manifestations, underlying causes, and suggestions for ameliorating the problems experienced in the ELP during this period. The main conclusions are that a relatively small number of disaffected instructors had a disproportionately negative impact on an otherwise effective group of teachers, and that certain organizational and administrative aspects of the program unintentionally exacerbated this problematic situation. Changes in management structure and personnel policies, as well as professional development training are recommended to address these problems.

The purpose of this article is to share my reflections as Director of the English Language Program (ELP) at International Christian University (ICU) from 2006 to 2012, specifically focusing on my analysis of problems present in the ELP during this time. This period included significant changes in the ELP, most notably, a major program reform, which ICU began implementing in the spring of 2012. It was also a period marked by internal conflict among many of the full-time teaching staff, resulting in what I felt was a relatively high degree of dysfunction in the operation of the program, particularly with regard to interpersonal working relationships and overall morale. Overt manifestations of this dysfunction included angry outbursts, threats, public denigration of colleagues' abilities or character, and accusations of professional misconduct, abuse, or harassment against colleagues. These manifestations of hostility occurred in meetings, social gatherings, hallway or office encounters, and extensively through emails, which were often sent to the entire ELP staff. In many cases, these actions either provoked backlashes of a similar nature by those attacked, or pleas for help in stopping what individuals felt were patterns of abuse, and harassment resulting in a generally unsafe work environment.

As Director of the ELP, I documented complaints about some form of offensive behavior against eleven full-time instructors out of roughly forty full-time instructors who worked in the ELP for part or all of the period from 2006 to 2012. For most of these eleven individuals, I only received a few complaints, but for a few of them there were repeated complaints over the whole six year period. In my opinion, the characterization of these instructors' behavior as "abuse", "unethical", "power harassment", or "bullying", that was included in many of these complaints, was not necessarily warranted in all cases; however, I do think that most of the complaints were prompted by behaviors that were, at the very least, unprofessional and inappropriate. This rather pervasive climate of hostility negatively affected every aspect of the ELP operation; the time and energy taken up in responding to and trying to resolve these conflicts and expressions of animosity severely reduced the program's ability to engage in productive collaboration, and weakened general morale. This was

evidenced in part by a number of instructors citing the actions of the negative minority as a major factor in their decisions to leave the ELP before their contracts ended. Of course, all programs encounter some degree of conflict, disagreement and personality clashes. However, the level of hostility and conflict in the ELP over this period, the inability or unwillingness to resolve matters civilly, and the negative impact on the morale and operation of the ELP during this time, were significantly greater than anything I have encountered in the thirty-seven years that I have worked in educational program administration.

As ELP Director, I tried to understand the causes of this conflict and dysfunctional behavior, and, to the extent possible, address those causes. These efforts included:

- Establishing a five-year strategic plan that outlined the known problems and ways for working on them
- Directing the creation of an ELP Vision and Values statement, which included language on the importance of being respectful of colleagues and the value of maintaining a working environment where people felt safe
- Proposing new protocols and guidelines for ELP meetings designed to make meetings more civil and effective
- Keeping an open door policy, and offering to meet with anyone who wanted a chance to complain, vent, seek clarification, or ask for help
- Improving the quality of meeting minutes to establish clearer records of ELP decisions, and the reasons underlying them, so that there would be less rehashing of the same issues

Nor was I alone in making efforts to solve the problems in the ELP. While the majority of full-time instructors deplored the behavior of the minority who were most involved in the offensive behaviors and, for the most part, stayed away from the fray as much as possible, a number of instructors voluntarily tried to intervene and mediate resolutions. Unfortunately, these individual efforts to reduce hostility in the ELP were largely ineffective and the problems actually increased over time. Not only were these efforts to reduce the hostility generally ineffective, they sometimes led to accusations that those who tried to intercede were complicit in the abuse, either by actively supporting the offenders, or because of their inability to do anything to stop the offenses.

I hope that the analysis presented in this paper will contribute to a better understanding of why the ELP had such a difficult time from 2006 to 2012. This article will present my perspectives on how the problems were manifested, what the underlying causes were, and what might be done in future to ameliorate the situation.

Background

I first received reports of the English program at ICU being an uncomfortable place to work from a few people in the early 1980s, long before I was associated with ICU, but while employed in Japan. I continued to hear occasional reports of unhappy ELP instructors leaving ICU between 1984 and 2004, after I had returned to the United States. Prior to accepting the ELP Director position in 2006, I was warned by several members of the ICU community that it was not a particularly easy place to manage. Therefore, it did not come as a surprise when I first came to ICU that many of the full-time teaching staff wanted to tell me of the difficulties they had been experiencing. Female instructors, in particular, expressed dissatisfaction with

their experience working in the ELP. The main gist of the complaints, as I understood them at that time, was that there was an “old boys” group who were often domineering and disrespectful toward many of their colleagues. This group was identified as being made up almost exclusively of American male instructors. I also received complaints when I first started as Director from a few of those identified as being part of the “old boys” group. Their concerns, as I understood them, were that they perceived many of their colleagues, particularly British and British Commonwealth nationals, as incompetent, unsuited to work in the ELP, and responsible for the “British Councilization” of the ELP, by which they meant that there was too much emphasis on language teaching and not enough on liberal arts. I learned that animosity between members of these sub-groups had flared up on a number of occasions in the years before I became Director.

I was familiar with situations like this from previous programs I had worked in, and I was initially optimistic about being able to make things better. However, the severity of the problems proved to be greater than I had experienced anywhere else, and the situation proved highly resistant to change. In reflecting on this, my main conclusions were that the causes of the problems manifested in the ELP from 2006 to 2012:

- were deep-seated and long-standing
- stemmed from a small number of people
- were fostered by certain aspects of ICU’s organizational and personnel policies
- were worsened by changes to the staffing structure of the ELP as part of the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) reforms implemented in 2008

In presenting a more detailed analysis of this situation, I will first provide a general description of the nature of educational organizations and related management concepts that I have found helpful in understanding conflicts in the workplace, and how the ELP fit into those concepts. I will then look at the ELP from the perspective of “faults”, in a variety of senses of that word, to examine the specific manifestations and reinforcing mechanisms of the conflicts present in the ELP from 2006 to 2012. Finally, I will present recommendations for improving the situation for the future.

Educational organizational structures and the ELP

Higher education institutions typically adopt an organizational structure that is flat compared to the more hierarchical organizational structures of the military, medical organizations, government offices, and most businesses. This is the case at ICU, where many administrative positions, even the top administrative positions, are filled temporarily, generally from among the faculty. This flat organization means that while responsibilities are delegated to whichever faculty member is appointed to a particular leadership position, there is usually very little or no formal authority assigned with those responsibilities. The fact that almost all faculty are tenured also lessens the ability of those in leadership positions to exercise formal authority over their peers. To make such a system work, people who assume leadership positions typically are voluntarily accorded an appropriate degree of authority by those who temporarily work “under” them. In my experience, this willingness to voluntarily grant authority to colleagues in leadership positions is more prevalent in Japanese universities than in Western ones.

The ELP was a microcosm of this kind of flat structure, with broadly distributed responsibilities, little or no authority assigned to help carry out those responsibilities, and approximately 40 per cent of the full-time instructors holding tenured positions. However, one area where the ELP was different from the rest of ICU was in the ratio of Japanese to non-Japanese faculty; roughly speaking, ICU was two-thirds Japanese whereas the ELP was two-thirds non-Japanese. Implications of this difference will be discussed later in this paper.

Educational personnel and the ELP

The flat organizational structure favored by educational institutions, and exemplified by ICU and the ELP, can be a very attractive place for teachers to work for many reasons: there is considerable individual autonomy, excellent job security for those with tenure, good benefits, extensive holidays, a pleasant campus environment in which to work, and a decent salary. In most cases, there are the added benefits of working with motivated students, and a sense of purpose in helping young people learn and mature. There may also be opportunities for creativity, pursuing intellectual interests, and working collaboratively with colleagues. For certain people, a sense of power, status and respect can also be an attraction to working with university students and, when they can get it, from their colleagues. All of these positive attributes were available in the ELP.

Unfortunately, there can also be a dark side to this type of organization and work environment. One type of person who is attracted to this type of organizational structure I call a “low-risk entrepreneur” (Harshbarger, 2006). These are people who want autonomy, freedom from authority and constraints, as well as a chance to be successful, but without having to start at the bottom and rise through the ranks of a hierarchical organization. They are also typically not willing to take the risks associated with genuine entrepreneurship, such as starting their own enterprise, although some do use their secure positions in education as a base for outside entrepreneurial enterprises.

Work in an educational institution provides many of the benefits of entrepreneurship without the financial risks, but also without the potentially higher rewards, both financial and personal, of true entrepreneurship. In my experience, for most people who choose a career in higher education, this trade-off is a good one, and they can function happily with it throughout their careers. Unfortunately, for a few people, things can go sour. Sometimes the desire for personal reward – success, status and power -- is so strong that it cannot be sufficiently attained within a relatively low status job in education, particularly in college-wide programs like the ELP, whose status and prestige are generally among the lowest for teaching staff within the university. In the case of teachers in college-wide programs, being an instructor or lecturer instead of a professor can be seen as demeaning. Over time, some low-risk entrepreneurs may also begin to resent the flat organization that was initially attractive. Once they have tenure, there are not many ways to climb higher, or to gain more prestige and accolades. Student appreciation may no longer be sufficient to satisfy their need for respect and power. This resentment can turn to frustration and eventually bitterness, especially if the person feels unable to leave because of the benefits they would have to give up, or risks they would have to take elsewhere.

My sense is that the ELP was in many ways a perfect place for this type of frustrated, resentful, and embittered, low-risk entrepreneur to develop. I also feel that the presence of such people, even just a few, helps to explain a number of the problems that have been part of the ELP for many years. Basically, I believe that a few instructors have been prompted by

their thwarted entrepreneurial and personal desires to take out their disappointment on colleagues. I also think that they have been motivated to satisfy those desires through misguided attempts to shape their work environment in ways they believe will benefit them personally, even though these attempts may be detrimental to the program, the students, or their colleagues.

The phenomenon of a few “bad apples” having a disproportionately negative impact on an organization or group has been explored by Felps et al. (2006). In their model, a negative group member is a person who: “...exhibits one or more of the following behaviors: withholding effort from the group, expressing negative affect, or violating important interpersonal norms.” (p. 175). They go on to point out that the degree of impact one or more negative group members may have on a group depends on the relative power of the negative members compared to the others in the group, and the extent to which intervention is possible. The first reactions to a negative group member are to either motivate the member to reform his/her negative behavior, or to reject the member by either ignoring him/her, or removing him/her from the group. However, when these reform or reject responses are not possible due to the group having insufficient power, the only recourse is defensive self-protection. Felps et al. (2006) further point out:

...defensiveness as a reaction to a negative member recognizes that people’s reactions to difficult circumstances (especially if attempts to change the situation fail or cannot be tried) are often less than rational. Moreover, in contrast to responses like rejection or motivation, defensiveness does not resolve the negative member problem; rather, it can intensify the problem as teammates either withdraw or lash out in emotionally motivated attempts to protect themselves (p. 188).

Furthermore, Felps et al. (2006) highlight the principle of how “the bad is stronger than the good” in group interactions. That is: “At the level of the individual’s relation to the group, bad is undeniably stronger than good; any individual part can prevent the system from functioning, but no individual part can by itself cause the system to succeed.” (p. 190). They conclude by observing:

A lack of power is what prevents reform or rejection, and the “bad is stronger than good phenomenon” is what allows negative team members to have an asymmetrically strong effect on others. By extension, this asymmetric effect explains why dysfunctional individuals are an important concern for groups. In interdependent teams where people depend on each other, these intense psychological reactions are more likely to spill over beyond dyadic interactions to influence the broader social environment (p. 190).

Unfortunately, one effect of this spillover from dyadic interaction to the larger group context is to take the group’s focus away from its tasks and shift it to interpersonal issues. In addition, there is a diminishment of the group’s ability to work creatively, a lessening of motivation and cooperation, and an increase in interpersonal conflict. Ultimately, this leads to the group having weaker performance, a reduced sense of well-being, and less viability as a functioning group (Felps et al. 2006, p.184).

My assessment of the ELP from 2006 to 2012 is that it exhibited all of the dysfunctional elements described by Felps et al. (2006). There were a small number of

negative members who had a strong influence on the ELP as a whole, and on the working groups of which they were members. These negative members engaged in withholding of effort, displaying negative affect (nonverbal and verbal), and violating norms of interpersonal interaction (e.g. publicly demeaning colleagues, and making accusations and threats). There was a power balance context in the ELP that prevented reform and rejection as ways to cope with the negative members, which in turn resulted in defensive and sometimes extreme self-protection strategies by other ELP members. This led to a significant loss of group morale, functionality, well-being, and personal sense of safety, resulting in what I have termed a “faulty ivory tower”. That is, the ELP became a group largely cut off from the rest of the university community, unable to function properly due to excessive internal conflict and without sufficient delegation of authority to effectively manage that conflict.

Over time, the impact of this faulty ivory tower environment produced or amplified dynamics within the ELP which tended to exacerbate the situation. In reflecting on these internal dynamics, I feel that the term “fault”, in several of its meanings, both literal and metaphorical, can best provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dysfunction of the ELP from 2006 to 2012. Specifically, I will refer to the following three concepts to explain the ramifications of the faulty ivory tower situation in more detail:

- Fault lines -- major schisms that form due to underlying pressures
- Fault finding -- making accusations and assigning blame
- Fault making -- actions, like those in tennis, which go against the rules and which are normally penalized

Fault lines in the ELP

Like the cracks in the earth’s crust formed by plate tectonics, the ELP developed a number of schisms. These fault lines in the ELP environment, as with geological fault lines, were formed by opposing pressures. These pressures built up over time and were released suddenly, usually with destructive effect. The major fault lines and underlying pressures that I observed in the ELP from 2006 to 2012 involved:

1. Satisfied and dissatisfied instructors
2. Tenured and non-tenured instructors
3. Non-Japanese and Japanese instructors
4. Male and female instructors

I will describe each of these ELP fault lines in more detail.

1. Satisfied and dissatisfied instructors

This fault line derives from the forces set up by different levels of job satisfaction among those people who were attracted to work in the ELP. I have found that the distinction between job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction made originally by Herzberg (1987), and more recently reviewed by Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005), helps to understand what contributes to this aspect of workplace morale. As summarized by Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005), Herzberg’s model presents a set of satisfiers (also called motivators) and a set of dissatisfiers (also called movers), and identifies them as two distinct variables:

Satisfiers: achievement, recognition for achievement, interesting work, increased responsibility/authority, growth, and advancement

Dissatisfiers: company policy and administration practices, supervision, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, salary, status and security

In this model, increases in a person's degree of job satisfaction cannot be achieved by changes in the factors related to dissatisfaction and vice versa. That is, a higher salary will make people less dissatisfied, but not more satisfied. Conversely, recognized achievement will make people more satisfied, but by itself will not lessen their level of dissatisfaction. Increasing satisfaction and decreasing dissatisfaction need to be addressed independently (Bassett-Jones and Lloyd, 2005, p. 932).

My impression was that from this perspective, the majority of the instructors were quite satisfied with their positions in the ELP, and that their level of dissatisfaction was correspondingly low. However, and quite significantly, for a few instructors there was an opposite combination of low satisfaction (perception of insufficient recognition of achievement and opportunity for advancement) and high dissatisfaction (resentment of policies which promoted the program and reduced individual autonomy, perception of low status as a non-professor, and a sense of working with inferior colleagues). I believe these more strongly disaffected instructors became the "bad apple" negative group members as defined by Felps et al. (2006)

The presence of these malcontent negative group members in the ELP produced a "fault-line" between them and the majority of positive and relatively content members. This tension was further manifested in a number of sub-fault-lines including:

- Collaboration vs. politics
- Liberal vs. conservative
- College-wide program vs. CLA department
- Language program vs. liberal arts program

Pressures built up between those who preferred a collaborative, consensus building model of decision making, and the negative members who saw partisan politics as more attractive. Presumably the negative members felt they could achieve a greater sense of power and status by leading a small group in opposition to the rest of the instructors than they could as mere minority voices in a collaborative group effort. This penchant for division and opposition was manifested in a number of ways. In political terms, the negative group advocated a generally conservative stance -- preservation of tradition, individual freedoms, and a resistance to change -- in opposition to the generally more liberal members of the ELP who valued group cooperation and greater openness to change. The relatively high stakes of the curriculum reform undertaken during this time undoubtedly provided impetus to this politicizing of the ELP. Concerted efforts were made by the negative members to recruit others to "their side." This included setting up special email lists and holding private parties for selected colleagues, which at times reportedly turned into sessions for "bashing" those who were on "the other side."

Another sub-fault that also built up pressure in the ELP was the long-standing division over the so called "British Councilization" of the ELP, which was characterized by the negative minority as the language school antithesis of a liberal arts program. This distinction

seemed to be fabricated as a way to stir up conflict and to portray most non-Japanese/non-Americans as a threat to the ELP; in my experience, virtually all of the ELP members showed a very high regard for the liberal arts tradition at ICU and in the ELP, regardless of their nationality.

Further pressures resulted from a resentment of the negative members toward the college-wide program aspects of the ELP. The main problem of such an organization for them was the need for conformity to program norms in such areas as curriculum and grading policies. This conflicted with their entrepreneurial desire for autonomy, and led to instances where they simply refused to follow policies and procedures that had been approved by the larger group. This, in turn, encouraged other instructors to ignore policies and procedures, particularly when they observed instructors with tenure disregarding majority approved program policies. Unfortunately, this quasi-anarchy made decision making in the ELP far less effective, but no less acrimonious.

All of these sub-faults arising from the major divide between the mainly satisfied ELP members and a few unsatisfied members produced considerable and fairly constant tension, with periodic eruptions of hostility.

2. Tenured and non-tenured instructors

Another fault line that created difficulties in the ELP during this time was the lack of willingness or ability of the tenured instructors, as a group, to provide effective leadership or manage other responsibilities. Because some of the negative ELP members were also in the tenured group, the fault-lines and other dysfunctional aspects of the ELP showed up in this group as well. A number of the negative tenured instructors felt that they did not have any special duty or responsibility for helping to manage the ELP or for providing leadership. They resented the fact that they were not formally part of the ICU faculty group, and did not have impressive job titles. This resentment promoted a negative and cynical view of their positions as tenured members of the ELP. This lack of solidarity among the tenured group was a cause of concern for many of the non-tenured instructors, who naturally looked to them for leadership and guidance. In the absence of this leadership, the non-tenured instructors felt they needed to either take sides, or to just stay out of harm's way. In a few instances though, non-tenured instructors tried to take on the leadership responsibilities that the tenured instructors were not able to provide. These efforts were intermittently successful, but only provided a temporary respite from the pressures in the underlying fault-lines, and gradually led to a sense of the tenured group as more a part of the problem than the solution, resulting in a further erosion of morale in the ELP.

In addition to the presence of negative members, I think that the lack of effective functionality of the tenured group during the time I was Director was also due to changes in the structure of the ELP as a result of the CLA reforms of 2008. As part of that reform, a group of ICU faculty, who had been an important part of the ELP until then, was removed. Prior to the CLA reforms, up to eight members of the Language Division of the CLA faculty were assigned to teach part of their academic workload in the ELP, as well as to participate in meetings and other aspects of the program. As members of the ELP, these CLA faculty members provided an important measure of maturity, wisdom and professionalism. Five of the eight were Japanese, which I believe also contributed to a healthy cultural balance in the ELP that was severely damaged when they left. Their relatively higher status as professors also appears to have provided a degree of counterbalance to the influence of the negative ELP instructors. When the CLA reform removed these professors from the ELP, there was no

guidance as to how the role of the tenured instructors should change. In effect, the removal of the CLA faculty made an already flat ELP organizational structure even flatter. No one had any authority -- actual or moral -- over anyone else. I believe this vacuum of leadership and authority allowed the underlying fault lines to take on more potency and led to increased hostility and dysfunctional behavior, especially from 2008 to 2012.

Another major change, around the same time as the removal of the CLA faculty from the ELP, was the adoption of a new basis for filling the position of ELP Director. Before the reforms, the norm had been to assign one of the CLA faculty who worked in the ELP to take on the job of Director for a few years and then choose someone else to take a turn. This was less than ideal, particularly from the perspective of the CLA faculty, who were, for the most part, more interested in their research, teaching and other faculty duties than in being ELP Director. Most had no specialized training or experience in program administration. As a result, ICU decided to hire a "professional" Director, by conducting an open search, and I was the first person to be hired on this new basis. Unfortunately, from my perspective, there were aspects of the new ELP Director position that severely limited my ability to mitigate the increasing dysfunction of the ELP. My position as Director was at the level of a CLA faculty member, but without tenure. I was hired on a four-year contract, with possible renewal dependent on the approval of the ELP instructors and the ICU administration. I also had no overt authority over any of the ELP instructors. The position of ELP Director was, like most other administrative positions filled temporarily by faculty at ICU, dependent on the voluntary granting of authority by those being administered. This generally works well in Japan, and at ICU, because the majority of people are willing to grant this temporary authority to their peers. However, my lack of authority as Director was clearly understood and manipulated by the negative members. They knew that they could withhold effort from the group, express negative affect, or violate important interpersonal norms with impunity. My attempts to gain voluntary cooperation and compliance from these negative members ironically resulted in threats to accuse me of power harassment. Compounding this problem was the fact that most of the rest of the ELP instructors believed that the Director naturally had authority that could be used to stop the negative members from continuing to provoke hostility and dysfunction. Some people perceived my inability to stop the personal attacks and undermining of the ELP reform process as unwillingness on my part, rather than the result of the negative members ironically having more power than I did.

3. Male and Female Instructors

Alongside the satisfied/dissatisfied and tenured/non-tenured fault lines, a gender fault-line was also a significant source of pressure in the ELP resulting in friction, unpleasantness, and at times trauma, almost exclusively to the detriment of female instructors, who represented slightly over one-third of the full-time ELP instructors during this time. As mentioned earlier, female instructors almost universally complained about what they perceived as pervasive sexism by a minority of the male instructors toward them as individuals and as a group. They felt that this sexism rose to the level of misogyny; a few reported feeling physically, emotionally and professionally in danger from one or more negative members of the ELP. Many women felt (and I think justly so) disappointed by the failure of myself and others to stop the pattern of disrespect and hostility directed toward them.

4. Non-Japanese and Japanese Instructors

Compounding the gender fault line was another fault line between Japanese and non-Japanese instructors. As mentioned earlier, Japanese instructors represented roughly one-third of the total full-time instructors after the tenured Language Division faculty members were removed in the CLA reform. Members of this minority group often expressed feelings of being ignored, not respected as colleagues, and that they always had to be the ones to back down or compromise whenever disagreements arose with members of the non-Japanese majority. Moreover, because more than 80 percent of the Japanese instructors were female (and more than 80 percent of the non-Japanese instructors were male), these two fault lines had a doubly marginalizing impact on female Japanese instructors. Non-Japanese female instructors were also doubly marginalized by virtue of their extremely small numbers; there were typically only three non-Japanese female instructors during this period out of 27 full-time instructors.

Other pressures across the Japanese/non-Japanese fault line arose from differences in according authority to those in leadership roles. For the most part, the Japanese instructors followed the norms of Japanese organizations in voluntarily granting authority to those who had administrative or managerial responsibilities, even though there was none of the actual authority that would be found in a more hierarchical organization. Most of the non-Japanese ELP instructors were also supportive of voluntarily ceding authority to those assigned responsibilities for management and coordination. However, a few of the non-Japanese were only willing to cede authority to those who had been delegated responsibility as long as it resulted in getting outcomes they wanted. As soon as a decision went against their interests or ideologies, they knew that they could simply ignore it and encourage others to follow suit.

In summary, the period from 2006 to 2012 revealed a number of fault lines in the ELP, and an increase in the negative impact of the opposing forces underlying those fault lines. Partisan politics largely replaced cooperation and collaboration, and no one was able to stem the rise in frequency of open interpersonal conflict and hostility. While the impact of all this friction was detrimental to those on both sides of each fault line, my perception was that female instructors, Japanese instructors, and a few others outside the “old boys group” received the brunt of the negative pressures, and were the most severely damaged by the divisions and fault lines in the ELP over this period of time.

Fault finding in the ELP

Finding fault in others and criticizing them for those perceived faults was also prevalent in the ELP during this time. In general, this fault finding was conducted in a much more public way than was necessary or appropriate, and involved frequent over-reactions and exaggerations by the fault finders, as well as by those defending themselves from such attacks. The combatants in this fault finding arena generally demonstrated either an inability, or unwillingness, to understand how their accusations and criticisms, particularly public ones, were counterproductive and harmful, not only to those being criticized, but to the larger ELP as well. My impression is that many of the criticisms were based on prejudices and misperceptions derived from being on one side or the other of one of the previously mentioned fault lines in the ELP. There also seems to have been an element of a few instructors actually wanting to make others unhappy. I think this desire to make others feel

bad can best be explained by the precepts of a psychological theory called Transactional Analysis explored by Harris (1976) and Berne (1996). Their analyses revealed that, in many cases, people who feel “not OK” about themselves feel perversely better if they can make those around them also feel “not OK.” In the case of the ELP, I think that for a few disaffected instructors it was more painful to work with a group of contented colleagues than it was to be in a situation where everyone was “not OK” to some extent. They saw the general contentment of their colleagues, but were not able to join them in that contentment. Thus, deliberately causing others to be frustrated, angry or fearful through personal and public fault finding allowed the few truly disaffected instructors to feel less alone and more in control.

I think differences in cultural values may have come into play in the area of fault finding. In certain Western cultures, conflict, argument, and personal criticism are relished as a form of game-like combat. I believe much of the frequent verbal sparring in the ELP was prompted by a few instructors’ enjoyment of engaging and “defeating” colleagues in the public arena. Attempts to explain to those who liked this kind of sport that being subjected to this type of public conflict was unpleasant for many of the rest of the ELP members were often shrugged off as “not my problem”. This is an area where I feel the predominance of non-Japanese instructors in the ELP set up a different dynamic from the prevailing ICU environment, which was much more sensitive to the need to preserve harmony and civility, at least on the surface.

Fault making in the ELP

The final concept of fault that I would like to apply in this analysis is related to making faults, or simply breaking the rules, and how such rule breakers are normally penalized, but generally couldn’t be in the ELP.

Much of the destructive behavior displayed in the ELP between 2006 and 2012 represented a violation of the rules or norms of professionalism and civility, at least as I understand professionalism and civility. Shouting and swearing at others in public, exaggerated criticisms and accusations, deliberate misrepresentations of facts, threats (both direct and implied), and attempts to undermine the professional reputation of others -- all of these took place repeatedly. A few ELP instructors will undoubtedly find my description of these behaviors to be expressed too mildly, and I must say that I did not have first-hand knowledge of all the incidents that were reported to me. In some cases terms like “harassment”, “bullying” and “abuse” may have been justified. However, my main point here is that regardless of the severity of the faults committed, the lack of ability to ameliorate such behavior needs to be rectified. Unfortunately, as previously noted, the loss of CLA faculty from the structure of the ELP, the lack of authority given to the ELP Director, and the absence of a cohesive tenured group to provide leadership, did not leave any truly effective way of dealing with the destructive behavior of a few individuals. For many in the ELP, there was a strong desire for a parental figure who could respond effectively to the childish petulance, tormenting of others, and selfishness of a few disaffected members. Because I was not in a position to act in a parental way as Director, I instead attempted to respond on an adult level. Rather than engage in sorting out individual, “He hurt me first! -- Did not! -- Did too!” types of disputes, I tried to focus on making the norms of civility and professionalism more overt, and to raise everyone’s consciousness about the value in observing those norms. Toward this end, I introduced new meeting management protocols that were designed to minimize open conflict in ELP meetings. In 2012, the Assistant Director and I also proposed

communication protocols for email and other written forms of communication in a similar attempt to reduce the incidence of “cyber bashing” and “flaming” in the ELP. Deep-seated differences on pedagogical or policy issues were opened for discussion in meetings and online by all members of the ELP. Many of the results of these discussions were incorporated into the ELP Vision and Values document to make the underlying assumptions and premises of the ELP open and available for reference whenever disputes relating to them occurred. I believe these efforts had a beneficial effect on the ELP, but they were not able to bring about anything close to a healthy, fully-functional ELP over this time period. They served to suppress the worst of the symptoms, but did not reduce or eliminate any of the underlying causes of the problems. Unfortunately, these efforts to limit the expression of hostility also had a stultifying effect on much of our formal communication. During meetings, for example, we were forced to accept awkward, at times sullen, silence as preferable to open hostility.

Recommendations for the future

In summary, my analysis indicates that from 2006 to 2012, a small number of disaffected instructors had a disproportionately negative impact on an otherwise productive and collaborative team of colleagues in the ELP. I have speculated that the negativity expressed by these disaffected individuals was primarily a result of unhappiness with their employment situations, frustrated by their inability to leave that employment because they saw the personal losses and risks as too great. Regardless of what engendered the hostility and pervasive negativity expressed by these individuals, it resulted in significantly lowered morale in the ELP and severely limited the ability of the program to operate with normal effectiveness. This was not what ICU wanted for its historically excellent English program, and it was not what the majority of teachers in the ELP wanted, or deserved.

The potential for truly great collaboration, collegial communication, innovative curriculum improvements, and more effective instruction and research was very strong in the ELP from 2006 to 2012, and remains very strong in the nascent ELA. ICU continues to attract outstanding students and teachers. ICU recognizes the value of, and remains committed to, providing an international, bilingual, Christian-inspired liberal arts education. ICU understands the crucial role of its language programs in providing that education. Unfortunately, if my analysis is correct, the underlying causes of the interpersonal conflict and relative dysfunction of the ELP from 2006 to 2012 are still present as the new English for Liberal Arts (ELA) program begins. Negative members are still present, pressure along the internally generated fault lines continues to build up, and future traumatic disruptions seem inevitable. Therefore, in order to significantly reduce the faults and fault-lines in the fledgling ELA, I recommend taking action in three areas: (a) management structure, (b) personnel policies, and (c) counseling and professional development training.

In the area of management structure, I think the University should find ways to re-incorporate CLA faculty and administrators into the ELA decision making and policy setting processes. One way to do this would be to set up an ELA Advisory Committee, made up of CLA faculty and ICU administrators, which would have authority to resolve disputes. A standing committee would also help to make the CLA faculty more aware of the ELA, and it could look for other opportunities to bring the CLA and ELA closer together, making the ELA less of an ivory tower. Another option for improving the management structure of the ELA would be to review and redefine the roles and responsibilities of the tenured instructors. This group enjoys significant benefits, and the relatively few (currently three out of eleven)

Japanese tenured instructors are asked to take on many additional responsibilities within the university in return for those benefits; however, almost nothing is asked or required of the non-Japanese tenured instructors beyond the regular duties of all full-time instructors. Furthermore, the position of ELA Director should be made less tenuous and either given more authority, or given greater access to those with authority, such as the ELA Advisory Committee previously suggested. As things stand now, the ELA Director must depend on all instructors being willing to grant him or her authority. This is a very unstable situation because it is too easy for instructors to refuse to honor that implicit contract. When that happens, the ELA Director position is reduced to little more than a temporary clerical position with insufficient support for providing leadership or resolving disputes.

In the area of personnel policies, I feel that particular attention should be paid to reducing the current potential for encouraging the development of malcontent low-risk entrepreneurs among instructors who are given tenure. The presence of just a few such “bad apples” will continue spoiling the whole barrel. One possibility that has been suggested would be to abolish tenure in the ELA. This would certainly prevent any malcontent teachers from becoming caught up in the honey trap of tenure, but would also prevent the program from benefiting from those teachers who truly can contribute positively and contentedly until retirement. In my opinion, it would be better to keep the tenure system, which provides an important degree of stability, but it will be critical to only grant tenure to individuals who understand the need for, and are comfortable working in, a college-wide program, who prefer collaborative decision making over divisive partisan politics, and who are least likely to become fomenters of discord and negativity. Such qualities should be given the highest priority in making tenure appointments in the ELA. Good education, teaching skills, experience and scholarly publications are certainly important criteria in selecting instructors; however, because the ELA is a college-wide program, it is not a compatible place for people who see their own egos and need for autonomy as more important than the collective good of the program, no matter how many degrees or publications they might have.

In addition, the balance of Japanese and non-Japanese instructors in the ELA should be reconsidered. The current ELA practices in hiring and assigning teachers to courses limit the ratio of full-time Japanese instructors to no more than one-third. I believe a higher proportion of Japanese instructors, at least one-half, would provide more flexibility in teaching assignments, promote more equal participation in discussing issues and making decisions, and would help avoid many of the faults described in this article.

Final Thoughts

Although I have dwelt primarily on analyzing the chronic dysfunction in the ELP in this article, I would also like to say that the majority of people I worked with from 2006 to 2012 were wonderful colleagues, great teachers, and hardworking dedicated professionals who clearly deserve a safer, more satisfying, and less fraught environment in which to work. The minority groups of Japanese and female instructors, in particular, need to be better supported and enabled to collaborate fully and comfortably with all of their colleagues. Therefore, until such time as the current systemic faults in the ELA can be rectified, I recommend that the University provide counseling and training in professional workplace interaction for all members of the ELA.

The final aspect of my tenure as ELP Director from 2006 to 2012 that I would like to touch on is my own personal faults. As Director I was responsible for the overall operation

and quality of the program. Therefore, the problems I have described in this article and the ineffectiveness of the attempts to rectify them are my failures. To what extent these failures were due to my personal inadequacies, poor judgment, or lack of courage is something I must continue to examine and reflect on. However, the main purpose of this article was to focus on systemic causes and conditions, rather than critiquing specific individuals, including myself. Nonetheless, I recognize that my weaknesses necessarily played a role in the ELP's difficulties while I was Director. I sincerely hope that the next Director will be able to meet the challenges of this job more successfully than I have, and that he or she, the students in the new ELA, and ICU overall, will benefit from my reflections and recommendations for future improvements.

The Author

Before becoming Director of the ELP at ICU, Bill Harshbarger worked as a language program director for 30 years. During that time he directed programs in Japan, Oman, and the United States. As part of both his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, he studied interpersonal, group, and organizational communication. During a 20-year period in the U.S., he directed a major university language program, served as President of the Washington State TESOL affiliate, and as President of the American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP). He met regularly with other program directors at national and international conferences. Dr. Harshbarger also participated in the formation of the Council on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA). He has regularly taught courses in the programs he directed. He has also taught at the post-graduate level, including courses on Language Program Administration, Language Teaching Methodology, and Intercultural Communication.

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