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One month before debate on hiring native English speakers for our schools...

MOE puts ad in UK for teachers

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EVEN as the debate on whether Singapore should recruit native English speakers was going on in newspaper forum pages, the Ministry of Education was already recruiting teachers from at least one English-speaking country — Britain. Interviews may already have been conducted in London last month.

The New Paper found out that the MOE had placed an advertisement on 5 May in the Times Education Supplement of Britain, one of the most prominent publications in Britain for educators.

In the advertisement, the MOE said it was looking for "experienced, qualified native speakers of English to teach English as a first language, English Literature, Geography, History, Knowledge and Inquiry."

The ad even provided a time frame for interviews.

E-MAIL CV BY MAY

It said "if you wish to be considered for interviews in London in early June 2006, please e-mail your curriculum vitae and the completed application form... by May 2006".

On 10 Jun, Education Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam suggested that native English speakers might be hired by the Ministry.

"If need be, we can bring back native speakers of the English language to help us... to strengthen the teaching of the English language," he had said.

He was speaking at an education conference organised by Hwa Chong Institution to map out Singapore's future educational landscape.

The statement met with a strong response, with some teachers and parents arguing that this was not necessary, given Singaporean teachers' strong English language skills.

Minister of State for Education Rear-Admiral (NS) Lui Tuck Yew later called for a pragmatic approach.

He said: "What we need in our schools is more good teachers. I don't particularly care where they come from. They can be retired teachers who can be enticed back to teach, or from overseas."

Well the ads are out and the interviews may have been conducted, in what seems to be a done deal. But the debate still lingers.

Commenting on the move to hire UK teachers, British Council Director Eunice Crook said it may not be a long-term solution.

She said: "We prefer not to use the term 'native speaker' because it is rather ambiguous and controversial. Our preference is to use the term 'high-proficiency user'. There are many highly proficient users of English among Singaporean teachers."

She said the British Council agreed with Minister Lui that having good teachers — and not nationality — was

the crux of the issue.

"Bringing teachers from the UK would be a quick way to increase the number of highly proficient teachers."

"However, in the long term we strongly believe that the sustainable solution for Singapore is to expand its own cadre of teachers who are highly proficient, well-trained, experienced and qualified."

Said Mrs Cheng Kah Gek, 49, mother of three girls aged 7 to 19: "Sure, if they have the budget, the MOE can hire good teachers from wherever they like."

"But they have to look at the fundamentals. They hire Chinese language teachers from China, English teachers from Britain, or America, or Australia, wherever they think native speakers come from."

"But what is the impact on our teachers here? I feel we ask too much of our local teachers in primary school. They teach English, Maths and

Be Different. Teach in Singapore.

The Ministry of Education (Singapore) is looking for experienced, qualified native speakers of English to teach English as a first language, English Literature, Geography, History, Knowledge and Inquiry.

We are looking for teachers who:

- Hold a relevant degree in English Language or Humanities (e.g. English Literature, Geography, History, etc.)
- Have a recognised Teaching Certificate in Teaching English (e.g. PGCE, TEQIP, TETL, etc.) or relevant teaching subject (e.g. Geography, History, etc.)

Newly qualified teachers are encouraged to apply, as they MUST have completed the selection process.

You can look forward to:

- An attractive remuneration package including medical and dental benefits, employee's provident fund, annual airfare, and other benefits, dependent on qualifications and workable working experience.
- Excellent work-life balance (teaching with limited absence, flexibly working on average 30-35 hours, 4 weeks and 2 days per week the rest of the year for Singaporean non-residents).
- Access to extensive staff development opportunities of local and international level.
- Interest free working loan.

Details and application forms are available at www.teaching.com. You can view the video recording of our online career seminar held on 23 April 2006 on the website.

Although we conduct recruitment the entire year, if you wish to be considered for interviews in London in early June 2006, please email your curriculum vitae and the completed application form to teaching@moet.gov.sg by 19 May 2006.

200 TEACHERS URGENTLY NEEDED

MOE urgently needs teachers to work with primary schools. We need teachers such as English and Mathematics. We have limited slots for expert teachers. The able people must be ready to long after you've gone, provide you with all support you'll need for other your education.

We have one or two positions (General or Specialist) available for experienced teachers. Education Specialist: English Teacher (Year 4-6).

Can foreign teachers adapt?



Teachers from other countries will have to adapt, they would not know what local phrases mean. It is not wrong to them, but how many will there be, and what is their task?

— Alvin Tan, artistic director of The Necessary Stage

Science and all levels in primary school. Will the 'native teachers' do that? Or are they only teaching older children? What happens to English for young children then?"

Mr Alvin Tan, artistic director of The Necessary Stage added: "It's a bit sad. We have our own teachers, we are trying to promote our own literature."

"Our teachers can do something that foreign teachers can't. They can understand local context. For example, they can use a

passage in Singlish, work with the students and see how they would say it in good English."

The MOE has said that it has tried recruiting native speakers in the past, but does not attract more than a handful a year because of its strict standards. The Straits Times reported last month.

The ad in the Times supplement said candidates must have "a recognised Teaching Certificate in teaching English or relevant teaching subject".

There are now about 40 foreign native speakers among the more than 2,500 teachers who teach English and general paper in secondary schools and junior colleges.

While the MOE may want to bump up these numbers, it may have to contend with private Singapore schools which have similar ambitions — ads from enrichment centres for children here, such as the Morris Allen Study Centre, have also been spotted in the Times supplement.