

Panel Discussion

“English Communication Skill in Engineering & Technology Education”

Date: 29 September 2010 (16 : 20 - 17 : 50)

The role of institutions of higher learning in engineering and technology is not only to conduct engineering and/or technology education but also to train and nurture engineers who are able to establish careers internationally. This is a great challenge for institutions of higher learning both in Singapore and Japan. In Japan, one area of particular concern is the poor English communication skills of students from the National Colleges of Technology. Efforts to improve their English communication skills are underway with respective National Colleges of Technology taking on a more pro-active role to explore opportunities for their students to use English. Strategies such as developing English-based curricula, organizing study trips, and planning English speech contests for their students have been adopted. Kumamoto National College of Technology has started developing some communication skills modules conducted in English for their year four and five students.

The Federation of Kyusyu/Okinawa National Colleges of Technology has also in taken the initiative to organize an English Intensive Course every August which is supported by the Department of Communication Arts and Social Science of Singapore Polytechnic. Unfortunately, the course enrollment is limited to only twenty students.

At this panel discussion, we are delighted to welcome panelists who have been actively taking part in the efforts to improve the Japanese students' English. Besides sharing their experiences in teaching communication skills modules in English at the National Colleges of Technology, conducting classes in English during study trips, coordinating English lessons in enterprise and developing a practical communication skills curriculum, they will also share some teaching methods that were employed in their classes to motivate students to improve their English ability. It is hoped that this panel discussion will encourage a fruitful discussion so as to achieve a shared common goal which is to share ideas and strategies on how to improve the teaching and learning of English communication skills in Japan.