

### **11th Governing Board Meeting**

The SEAMEO RETRAC convened its 11th Governing Board Meeting (GBM) at the Institut Aminuddin Baki (IAB), in Genting Highlands, Malaysia, from August 27 to 30, 2008. Attending the GBM were 12 RETRAC Board members and senior officials and distinguished guests from various institutions including IAB, MOE (Thai land), MOE (Malaysia), and MOET (Vietnam).

Among the issues discussed, the Board noted that, as stated in the Memorandum of Agreement and the Enabling Instrument duly signed by the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and SEAMEO, SEAMEO RETRAC is a subordinate body of SEAMEO, and thus, enjoys the status of an international organization and consequently the immunities and privileges like those enjoyed by other SEAMEO Centers. Therefore, the Board proposed that SEAMEO RETRAC should enjoy similar basic tax exemption. Eventually, the Board authorized the Chairperson of the 11<sup>th</sup> GBM, also Board Member for Vietnam, to work closely on the issue of tax exemption with the Ministry of Education and Training and other related government agencies in Vietnam, and to keep the Board informed of the development.



### **SEAMEO Center Directors Meeting**

The 2008 SEAMEO Center Directors Meeting (CDM) was convened on 23-24 July, 2008 at Eastin Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand, with a new format which is believed to be more informative and provide greater opportunity for collaboration. Most substantial concerns were introduced into three segments that included SEAMEO Units' updates, collaborative meetings and a networking session.

The most common concerns of the Centers were discussed in the meeting covering collaborative networking and partnership among SEAMEO Units, SEAMEO branding, and the immunities and privileges. SEAMEO SEARCA shared its experiences on networking and partnership while SEAMEO RETRAC presented the needs for the branding of SEAMEO and discussed various viewpoints on it. In addition, the Secretariat provided a summary of the immunities and privileges that every SEAMEO Unit currently enjoys.

Distinct from the usual practice in the past CDMs, this year's meeting gave ways for SEAMEO existing and potential partners to present their priorities and interests and matched them with the operations of various SEAMEO Units, identifying areas of mutual interest and possible collaboration. The panel was composed of representatives of UNESCO, the ASEAN Secretariat, the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (AUAP), the Australian Embassy to Thailand, the University of Tsukuba and the British Council.

Among the various agreements and plans laid out in the 2008 CDM, most critical items included 1) the strategy to pursue in the proposed Center evaluation, 2) the standard framework to define the commitments of the SEAMEO host countries including basic immunities and privileges for the Centers 3) the proposal on branding, networking and partnership, and 4) the guidelines in accessing and utilizing the SEAMEO untied funds. Accordingly, the actions taken on these items will be presented at the High Officials Meeting in December this year. To give more time for discussions and presentations about their activities, all the centers agreed to add an additional day to the schedule of the next CDM.



### **International Conference on Basic Education Curriculum Reform**

Like previous GBMs, in this 11th meeting, SEAMEO RETRAC organized an international conference on "Basic Education Curriculum Revisited: A Look at the Current Content and Reform," on August 27, 2008. Attending the conference were the Board Members and about 50 educational experts and educators from Malaysia. The main focus of the conference was a discussion about innovations and reforms in basic education curriculum in different countries in Southeast Asia.



The conference gave a country profile on basic education curriculum from each of the SEA countries. Furthermore, the conference also kept the participants updated with achievements and reforms in basic education. Participants at the conference expressed their great interests in the topic through their active involvement in discussing, giving comments, and sharing ideas as well as experiences in initiating the improvement of basic education curriculum in their own respective context. They highly appreciated the conference through which they can gain a better understanding of educational systems and practices in Southeast Asia.

### **Visit of the USC Rossier School of Education**

In September, 2008, SEAMEO RETRAC hosted a delegation from the University of Southern California (USC) Rossier School of Education. A wide range of matters was discussed. Particularly, a seminar on “Current Issues in Educational Management at Higher Education in the United States” was organized at SEAMEO RETRAC for more than forty participants from various institutions in Ho Chi Minh City and neighboring cities. Topics presented and discussed in this seminar included an introduction of USC and Rossier School of Education, and an overview of American higher education and contemporary issues in administration. In addition, the delegation had an opportunity as well to work with the Institute of Educational Research and Ho Chi Minh University of Foreign Languages and Information Technology to learn more about educational situations in both public and private higher education in Vietnam. This is a great pleasure for both Dr. Do Huy Thinh, SEAMEO RETRAC Director, and Dr. Ho Thanh My Phuong, Dean of Education, to develop linkages with their *alma mater*.



## **Educational Management for High School Leaders in Vientiane, Lao PDR**

As one of its major functions in assisting Lao PDR education, from 28 to 30 July, 2008, SEAMEO RETRAC conducted a training course in educational management for high school leaders in Vientiane, Lao PDR. There were forty principals and vice principals of high schools in different provinces taking part in the training. Facilitators for this course were, in addition to SEAMEO RETRAC lecturers, professors and experts from California State University, Fullerton and the University of Vanderbilt in the USA. Topics presented and discussed in this course included instructional leadership, assessing student learning achievement, human resource management, and the application of ICT in education.



## **Field Study Visit for Thai Students**

SEAMEO RETRAC arranged a study tour from October 12 - 15, 2008, for one lecturer and five graduate students from Shinawatra University, Thailand. The purpose of the visit was to help them learn about the learning environment, conditions, facilities and strategies in Vietnam and enhance cooperation between the two institutions including faculty and student exchange.



## **Graduation Ceremony & Opening Ceremony of the MA-Applied Linguistics Program**

The graduation for the third intake and the opening for the fourth one of the Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics Program, jointly conducted by Curtin University of Technology (Australia), SEAMEO Regional Language Center (RELC) and SEAMEO Regional Training Center in Vietnam (RETRAC), were held on 25 August 2008. The program has received great attention from the public, and, for each intake which only receives forty, there were nearly two hundred applicants. Since 2006, more than 120 graduates have finished the program successfully. This postgraduate program continues to be one of the successful ones in Vietnam thanks to its experienced lecturers, flexible mode of delivery, and reasonable cost. There is no doubt that the program has significantly contributed to Vietnam's human resource development in general and to teacher training in TESOL in particular. Also on this occasion, five tuition scholarships were granted to mark the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Australia-Vietnam diplomatic relations.



## **Graduation Ceremony & Opening Ceremony of Postgraduate Diploma Programs**

This joint program by SEAMEO Regional Language Center (SEAMEO RELC) and SEAMEO Regional Training Center in Vietnam (SEAMEO RETRAC), successfully

conducted the thirteenth and fourteenth courses in 2008. About 80 teachers of English completed this program and celebrated their achievements on 16 June 2008. The opening ceremony of the fifteenth course was also organized on the same day. To date, over 600 Vietnamese teachers of English have participated in the training since its inception in 1998. Though considered one of the most effective ones in English teaching and learning, the program is scheduled to end in 2010.

### **The English Speaking Club**

The English Speaking Club, intended for English learners at SEAMEO RETRAC, is organized at SEAMEO RETRAC every two weeks. Conducted by native English teachers, this regular event has created another cheerful space for students to mainly improve their speaking and listening skills with interesting topics such as *Holidays, Love, Travel and Tourism*.

### **Grant Proposal Writing Workshops**

Two separate training workshops on Grant Proposal Writing were organized for administrators and senior lecturers working in the field of international relations from 30 universities, and also for the RETRAC professional staff from the eighth to sixteenth of July. The workshops, facilitated by Mr. Matthew Charles Dull, a Research Fellow from Vanderbilt University, USA, provided participants with necessary skills on how to write a successful grant proposal including developing a letter of inquiry and needs statement, defining the project and creating the budget, process and access to the funding.



### **Professional Development Workshops for English Language Teachers**

In order to provide new and effective methods of English teaching, SEAMEO RETRAC conducted a workshop on “Improving Listening and Speaking Skills” and “Cooperative Learning” on April 17, 2008. Attending the workshop were thirty teachers from SEAMEO RETRAC and other universities. The presenter was Ms. Joyce Lim from California, USA.



### **Moodle Training**

SEAMEO RETRAC just conducted another training session on Moodle for its English language teachers on September 19, 2008. This was part of a series of workshops on how to construct a complete online course using the functionality within Moodle. The training was a hands-on event, covering the essential aspects of Moodle required to enable the teachers to start creating on-line courses, focusing on the principal activity modules, management of course files, sharing and archiving resources and monitoring course activities.

### **Overseas Study Opportunities**

On July 19, 2008, a seminar on American Education and the City College of San Francisco was held at SEAMEO RETRAC, attracting the participation of more than forty

students and parents. At the seminar, students were introduced various programs, admission requirements and visa procedures

In addition, SEAMEO RETRAC is the exclusive representative of Temasek Polytechnic, one of the five polytechnics in Singapore. On September 20, a seminar was conducted in which an announcement of granting up to 80% of the total tuition fee for students enrolling in Temasek. With a 3-year diploma received from Temasek along with working experience accumulated from the built-in internship programs, more than 90% of graduates are offered jobs within the first six months upon graduation, according to a recent survey done by Temasek.



### **Summer Program for Children**

In July 2008, more than 170 kids and teenagers participated in a special intensive English program entitled “Summer Camp 2008.” The Summer Camp has been jointly organized successfully for the three consecutive years since 2006 between SEAMEO RETRAC and the College of Extensive Education, California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), USA. The program aims to help children, mostly aged from 7 to 15, improve their English communicative skills and pronunciation in a fun and friendly learning environment. This program was not centered on any special course books. All native English speakers recruited by CSUF single-handedly designed teaching materials for each class in accordance with the learners’ age groups, their English proficiency levels, and preferences. Participating in this Summer Camp, children had a lot of opportunities to practice their English skills in real-life situations with their teachers through various exciting activities and cultural exchanges such as playing games, telling stories, acting,

singing, dancing and many other outdoor activities. As a result of this great success, SEAMEO RETRAC is planning to expand the program in the years to come.

