

From the Associates

IATEFL's Associates Coordinator Sara Hannam brings news from Teachers' Associations around the world.

Money makes the world go round!

From the Associates' Coordinator

This Associates' page will be devoted to a really important area of Teacher Association [TA] life, that is—money. I will provide feedback from the TA finances questionnaire that I gave out at Associates' Day 2007 and Silvija Andernovics will then contribute with the TA Agony Aunt first instalment. But before I start I would just like to flag the following information.



Associates
Coordinator,
Sara Hannam

STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ...

I am looking for agenda items for Associates' Day 2008 in Exeter. I want the day to be run partly by associates themselves to make it more meaningful to all participants. So—if you have an idea of a possible area we could cover or you would like to do a presentation yourself, please get in touch with me!

Teachers' Association Finances

Charles Dickens, the renowned British novelist wrote in *David Copperfield*:

Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery.

For most TAs in the world, balancing their books is a major challenge and one that is no easy task and, it would seem, works very much along the lines Dickens described. I decided to collect some information to see what is going on in different countries and to see if there are any similarities and, of course, any differences. The countries that took part were Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Iceland, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK, Ukraine, and the United Arab Emirates.

It will not be possible for me to report back on all the information generated, so please check the TA website (<http://www.dudeney.com/iatefl/associates/>) for a full listing of the raw data and if anyone wants to see a copy of the questionnaire, please just ask. It was a mixture of quantitative, or countable, questions and qualitative questions with the purpose of generating a more in-depth response. The TAs present were asked to gather the information before they came to Aberdeen. Two TAs did not take part as they felt they would not be able to answer on behalf of their Association.

Responses to the questionnaire

1 Sources of funding

100% of those TAs present rely heavily on membership money to fund their association, and 50% rely on income generated from conferences and events. 62.5% receive sponsorship from the British Council and 43.5% from publishers. 21.5% receive funding directly from the Ministry of Culture or other Government body in their country, whilst 9.5% receive an income from donations to the TA. A significant number of TAs receive an income from commercial activities such as selling newsletters and publications (6.5%), selling their contact list to ELT-related businesses (6.5%), running summer schools (3.5%) and project consultancy (3.5%).

2 Changes in funding

50% of those asked said there had been no change in their funding patterns, whereas 15.5% reported a drop in funding from the British Council and withdrawal of funds from regular sponsors (9.5%). This is in contrast to 3.5% who had received an increase in British Council sponsorship (3.5%) or an increase in sponsorship from publishers (6.5%). Some TAs also reported an increase in sponsorship from other ELT associations (6.5%) and an increase in joint activities generating from new sponsors (3.5%).

3 Obtaining funds

All those who responded agreed it was difficult to obtain funds, except one lucky TA which currently has a surplus. Responses can be grouped into (a) why is this the case? and (b) what is the result? In relation to the reasons, respondents cite a lack of interest from teachers in becoming members, the higher expectation of

a corporate return on the part of sponsors, a lack of interest from government bodies and the lack of time to pursue grant and funding opportunities in the day-to-day running. One respondent also mentioned poor marketing on the part of the TA to make it more attractive to sponsors. When talking about the result of this situation, a number of respondents listed that their newsletters had gone electronic in a bid to save money and the decline in membership had resulted in not being able to move TA projects forward despite good ideas due to lack of funding, and this despite 59% of those questioned noting that their TA received a tax exemption due to its status.

4 TA resources

Readers may be surprised to hear that only 31.5% of the TAs asked have an office, so that many volunteers work from home. 56% have a computer and internet connection for TA use and only 46.5% have a paid administrator, so that many volunteers do all the admin themselves. Despite all these hurdles, 78% still produce a newsletter and 93.5% still have an annual or bi-annual conference.

5 General Comments

Several points of interest were noted by the respondents. One person felt it was important to have a specific member of the committee responsible for finance and marketing, and that it needed to be looked at on a year round basis with thorough auditing – and preferably with the opportunity to learn from other TAs. These issues should not just be looked at as events happen. Concerns were expressed about the sustainability of TAs and about the amount of work done by volunteers, sometimes resulting in their paying out of their own pockets to ensure that the TA survives as operational funds are often the first area to be cut or they do not exist in the first place.

What can TAs learn from this information?

It is inspiring to see that so many individuals are willing to put time and effort into an organisation against all odds. This requires significant loyalty and commitment as well as a strong belief that TAs are worth the effort to keep them afloat as they perform such a key function for many classroom teachers. Clearly this issue is of importance to almost all the TAs who took part, so I would suggest it perhaps gets more airtime at Associates' Day in 2008. As

one TA representative said to me during the last Associates' Day 'we have to turn ourselves into mini businesses to survive—how does that match up with our goal of furthering education?'

This throws up two potentially differing perspectives. Can TAs adopt business principles and if so how? And what if not? Perhaps we can start our discussion at this level and then move on to focus on the specific areas that arose from the report listed below, with personal experiences from representatives present of their own TA.

Members

- Encouraging more members to join—how?
- Should membership money be so essential to the survival of the TA?
- Is there another way?

Should all TAs have a separate finance director?

- If so, what qualities should this person have?
- How could they ensure proper auditing and attention to detail?

How can TAs become sustainable?

- What does sustainability really mean?
- Is having a long-term view the answer?

The changing nature of sponsorship

- When sponsors withdraw funding as the TA no longer fits in with the sponsor's changing corporate aims?
- When it is known that sponsor's money is time-limited or piecemeal?
- When the return expected by sponsors is unrealizable or at odds with the TA's mission statement?
- Is there any other way of ensuring a sustainable income?

Marketing the Organization for Potential Sponsors

- How can this be done? Does it work?
- If not, why not?
- Will this change the TA's belief and adherence to their mission statement?



By Silvija Andernovics

This is a new section of the Associates' page where we will try to find solutions to some of the problems common to many teachers' associations.



Silvija Andonovics,
Deputy Associates'
Coordinator

We have so many difficulties in getting people to volunteer

The perennial problem, isn't it? How do we get those teachers/students to volunteer for the board, committee or SIGs or even to staff registration desks, stuff conference bags, sell raffle tickets or to present at conferences?

Well, I know that I have tried to encourage, urge, cajole, coerce, coopt, cry, compel, beg, appeal, pander, push, strongarm, compliment ...and all those other verbs that are equally applicable in these situations, all with varying success.

Let's look at the easy bit first.

For conferences:

- free registration/free membership
- free meal vouchers
- special certificates honouring volunteers
- conference t-shirts or other freebies that might exist.
- For presenters, I have appealed to ambassadors' wives, embassy staff and international women's club members as well as Fullbright scholars/teachers. Educators who have been on various Council of Europe seminars and workshops have an obligation to disseminate the information and ideas that they encountered in their courses. The same is often true for many other courses, trips and projects that teachers and students have been involved in. Many student teachers also have some interesting things to say. We do have a quality issue of course but at least we might have a larger pool of people to choose from.
- For a few years, one of our most sought after workshops presenters was the wife of the US

Ambassador who was a trained teacher and just loved travelling all over the country and meeting local teachers. She always said that she had the feeling that she was seeing the real country and not just what the government officially showed her husband.

For board, committee, SIG:

This is the hard one. I have spent a lot of time encouraging prospective candidates and appealing to their sense of professional duty. I've talked about the professional development and growth opportunities; about the support that they will be given in their post; about the opportunity perhaps to influence the way foreign language teaching will develop in a country (particularly true in the emerging democracies); about the benefits of having an association post on the CV. Sometimes it works if the person is ambitious enough or does realise the truth of what I have been saying.

I have also unashamedly asked people to help me out. If possible, I have written them wonderful references (nothing but the truth of course) or nominated them for trips and seminars abroad. Though since many of these travel opportunities crop up unexpectedly, you can never guarantee this.

Some associations also offer free membership and free conference registration, or cover transport costs, or offer free photocopying, or have a once a year Board dinner in a nice restaurant, business cards, lapel badges, letters to the institutions that the Board members work in, praising their professional input—brownie points need to be garnered at every opportunity.

Sometimes we groom our successors, or we delegate the position to a friend or capable person. And, in many cases, we appeal to the rank and file and a teacher musters up the confidence to put their name forward because they are interested and perhaps do want to make a difference and so the associations move on.

What does your association do? Any additional ideas or suggestions?

Any questions that you would like the Agony Aunt to deal with? Then please send them to: andys@latnet.lv.

Find out more about IATEFL's SIGS

If you would like more information about IATEFL's Special Interest Groups you can visit the website at <http://www.iatefl.org/members.asp> or contact the coordinators of each group at the relevant email address for details.

Business English – BEsig@iatefl.org
 ELT Management – ELTMSig@iatefl.org
 English for Specific Purposes – ESPSig@iatefl.org
 English for Speakers of Other Languages – ESOLSig@iatefl.org
 Global Issues – GISig@iatefl.org
 Learner Autonomy – LISig@iatefl.org

Learning Technologies – LTechsSig@iatefl.org
 Literature, Media and Cultural Studies – LMCSSig@iatefl.org
 Pronunciation – PronSig@iatefl.org
 Research – ResearchSig@iatefl.org
 Teacher Development – TDSig@iatefl.org
 Teacher Trainers and Educator – TTEdSig@iatefl.org
 Testing, Evaluation and Assessment – TEASig@iatefl.org
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