

I. Preface

I am most grateful for the invitation from Dr. YIP Kwok-hung, the Chairman of the Chinese University of Hong Kong School of Education Alumni Association Supervisory Committee, who offered me such a privileged opportunity to share how I put my master's thesis into practice at school in the educational seminar on 12th March 2016, which, was also the day the Tsung Tsin Schools Retreat was held. Thanks to Dr. YIP's assistance, I managed to forward my experience on and vision of school management through Dr. YIP despite my absence from the seminar.

During the years studying MA in Education in the University of Leicester in the U.K. between 1996-2002, I completed over 10 module courses and conducted a thorough survey on parents' concerns on school selection, followed by publishing a 100,000-word thesis. In an effort to probe into the issue from a macro perspective, I read over 100 reference books and collected opinions from more than 1,400 parents in 3 Christian private schools in forms of open-ended questionnaires and one-to-one phone interviews. The survey result indicates that, middle-income parents would arrange the three judging criteria as follows when it comes to school selection:

- (i) Moral education
- (ii) Academic qualifications
- (iii) Teachers' enthusiasm and their quality of pastoral care

Unquestionably, the above three factors are of vital importance to pupils' advancement. Therefore, school policies pertinent to the three areas have been carried out with close reference to the findings since my tenure as the Principal of Tsung Tsin Primary School and Kindergarten. This part will be further discussed in the next section, explaining the application of my thesis at school **in hope of creating a stimulating and engaging learning culture to enhance students' all-round development in terms of integrity, academic pursuits, as well as emotional needs.**

II. Immersion moral education

It is widely believed that people with higher IQ levels tend to be more successful; however, more and more research findings suggest that higher EQ actually matters even more. In light of the importance of the **two indispensable keys to success, namely, good morality and effective emotional management,** both the school and parents should ensure a close collaboration to nurture children as a virtuous person. Effective moral education should not be a sheer empty talk, it should be developed as a strong atmosphere in the campus and the family. Therefore, role-modelling and an array of teaching approach including religious education, activities as well as cross-curricular learning play an essential role in moral education. The following covers some of our moral education approaches implemented in school:

2.1 Role modelling

As mentioned above, **moral education should not be an empty talk. Instead, Principal and staff members, parents, as well as students themselves should act as exemplary role models for the pupils to look up to.**

Say we want our children to be helpful and caring. First, staff members should display altruism and

benevolence by involving themselves in voluntary service. Despite the hectic schedule, I serve as the teacher of The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education and the consultant of the Parent Support Committee and Affective Education Committee, in an effort to exchange opinions and knowledge concerning quality teaching with professionals through meetings, introduce effective policies to school, as well as promoting useful and practical teaching approaches to the public through speeches on a regular basis. Also, I volunteer as a member in Sham Shui Po District Coordinating Committee on Family and Child Welfare Services to work on children's welfare issues. Meanwhile, staff members in Tsung Tsun also share with the students their experiences and reflections in voluntary work during the Student Volunteers Inauguration Ceremony, morning/afternoon assemblies, children's worship and daily communication, further inducing our pupils to engage in voluntary work.

Moreover, **a wide range of voluntary services is available for parents to participate and extend moral education amongst students' families.** Being a parent volunteer at school is a win-win situation; not only does it enable parents to learn more about the school operation and their children's school lives, it also allows students to take pride in their parents' contributions to voluntary services. With an aim to render our support and help to society, we have been collaborating with H.K.S.K.H. Kei Oi Neighbourhood Elderly Centre since the academic year of 2011-2012 to arrange monthly elderly visit. As a result, parents will understand that 'it's better to give than receive' through authentic experiences and then be able to share the joy with their families. We believe that kindness is contagious; through role modelling can altruistic values be strengthened in their children's minds.

The third strategy is recruiting and rewarding student volunteers. Having 17 teams of student volunteers, we ask the student volunteers to wear the straps of different colours not only for identification purpose, but also for **cultivating a caring and loving culture in the midst of students.** In recognition of the student volunteers with outstanding performance, they will be nominated as the outstanding leaders. By doing so, **students will learn that everyone, regardless of age and grade, has the potential and capability to give a helping hand to others.**

2.2 Sustainable 'Positive Life Education Programme'

Building moral values in students cannot be implemented merely through moral education lessons or class teacher lessons. Instead, it should be integral to religious education, counselling and discipline, curriculum and all school-based activities, so that **students can maintain the practice of virtues at the heart of everyday life. In an effort to empower our students with positive attitudes,** 'Positive Life Education Programme' has been launched this school year, covering 6 personality traits including 'Love and be Loved', 'Gratitude', 'Forgiveness', 'Bravery', 'Creativity' and 'Hope' monthly through **a diversity of all-round, continuous and thematic activities.** The programme has been carried out as follows:

- (i) Our school-based psychologist will introduce one personality trait to our students during the morning assemblies and the Drama and Communication teacher will instruct the students to interpret the monthly theme in the form of performance, enabling our young, creative minds to acquire the core meaning of the theme and exude a positive demeanor ultimately.
- (ii) A series of religious and subject activities that are in line with the monthly theme introduced in the morning assembly will be held for a whole month, and the activities include:
- (iii) Class teacher will assist students in writing down their experience, good deeds and rooms for improvement on the 'Good Conduct Commitment' card or worksheet;

- (iv) Religious Education teachers will teach theme-related Bible stories and scriptures during worship time;
- (v) Subject teachers will discuss with students issues concerning the monthly theme during the after-class learning sessions such as ‘Let’s Talk in Putonghua’ and ‘Learn with Fun’;
- (vi) Drama and Communication curriculum will be specially crafted to comply with the Positive Life Education Programme, allowing students to continuously express their emotions and perform the personality traits learned through drama;
- (vii) Each theme will be featured in our annual publication ‘Tsung Tsin Newsletter’ and **parents are invited to submit their entries and share with readers their views and experiences on the 6 personality traits.**
- (viii) Apart from the monthly activities, the year-end Students’ Performance will also be held conforming to the ‘Positive Life Education Programme’, strengthening students’ awareness on the themes throughout.

2.3 School Setting

Other than activity planning, **creating an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning is also a crucial factor in facilitating moral education.** In view of engaging pupils with well-known mottos as sources of inspiration, we put up some famous quotes all around the campus from the staircase of the front hill, playgrounds to corridors. Through exposing students to famous Chinese and English sayings such as ‘If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way. (Napoleon Hill)’, we believe that these reminders will exert a formative and profound influence on the students’ personal growth and development.

As part of the ‘Positive Life Education Programme’, ‘Gratitude Wall’ and ‘Wall of Love’ are set up in each classroom and some public areas. By showcasing students’ work on the walls, students are motivated to learn from their peers and reflect on their own dispositions.

III. Comprehensive Learning Support

Apart from moral education, we also place a great importance on imparting knowledge and skills to the students. Hence, we are committed to catering for students with different needs by using outstanding, sufficient teaching aids and effective teaching approaches.

3.1 Endowing Students with Quality Learning Support Measures

Teacher’s qualifications, learning environment, as well as learning opportunities and culture are the three essential teaching aids. In order for our students to acquire accurate knowledge and clear understanding of the subjects we teach from the very beginning, we pursue specialised teaching provision to optimise the effectiveness of learning and teaching. For this reason, 28 native English-speaking teachers and 37 native Putonghua-speaking teachers are employed to enhance our pupils’ language proficiency in terms of accurate pronunciation, **articulation**, grammatical knowledge, which are clearly evident in our students’ outstanding achievements in solo and choral speaking competitions. **We believe that specialised teaching provision should not be limited to core subjects such as Chinese, English, Mathematics and General Studies, but is also applicable to Physical Education, Visual Arts and even extra-curricular activities.** Consequently, our Drama and Communication lessons are taught by experienced and professional tutors with drama qualifications and expertise. As both our boys and girls basketballs team are coached by a former

Hong Kong Basketball Team (Group B) player and a former China Women's National Basketball Team player, the teams have made remarkable achievements and some of the team players received the 'Outstanding Player Award' in the Kowloon West Area Inter-Primary School Basketball Competition' and were selected as the Hong Kong team players in the Schools Interport Basketball Competition.

Since learning environment plays a fundamental role in teaching and learning, each classroom is well-equipped with a book shelve and a smartboard (E-whiteboard) to foster extensive reading as well as interactive learning and teaching. We also **adorn the public area including staircases and corridors by exhibiting students' outstanding work on the display boards and showcases.** In recognition of students' accomplishments, 75 E-signages are installed to display students' performance and awardee lists on a daily basis. Several publications such as Tsung Tsin Newsletter, Gifted Education publication, Awards Record, School Features and Extra-curricular Activities Promotional Booklet will also be published and distributed to students (parents can obtain the publications in the school entrance and School Office) annually to record students' school lives, collaborative writing and artwork created by students and parents, as well as students' school-based and extramural competition awards. By documenting pupils' learning progress and performances, we believe that it can **stimulate mutual support among students and propel our students into even greater development.**

Considering that a support and active learning atmosphere cannot be established without staff assistance, a purposeful learning environment and sound school policies, we have adopted the following whole-school language policies to create more opportunities for our pupils to enhance their communicative competence:

- (i) All staff members have to wear either a yellow or red neck strap for classification purposes, reminding students to communicate with them in either English or Putonghua respectively.
- (ii) The 'Active Language User Award Scheme' is widely adopted amongst teachers, students, clerical staff and even menial staff so as to promote trilingualism around the campus.
- (iii) Conducted by native English-speaking and Putonghua-speaking teachers, 'Learn with Fun' and 'Let's Talk in Putonghua' booths enable students to take joy in partaking in the activities, communicating with their teachers and learning with iPad during recesses and lunch hour.
- (iv) Students' Octopus cards are used to record their attendance and participation in school. Outstanding performers will be rewarded chevrons in recognition of their enthusiastic participation.

The adoption of the above mentioned language policies not only contributes to creating an environment conducive to English and Putonghua learning, **it also extends students' experience in making conversations in English and Putonghua outside the classroom, strengthening their language competency even outside the classroom.**

3.2 Support for students with different learning needs

There is a tendency that people build upon their strengths and avoid weaknesses, which is also of common occurrence in children's learning. This may result in the young learners losing their interest and motivation in the areas that they have yet to master, as well as their progress being hindered due to the inappropriate learning pace. Taking into account that children at different grades and levels are encountering a host of different obstacles, **we see the urge to cater for the different needs of all pupils by rendering all-round teaching support for them.**

To that end, the School has arranged Chinese, English, Mathematics Remedial Classes (half tuition fee remission scheme applicable) for lower achievers to learn in small groups, so that the teachers to take care of 1' individual learning needs, **gradually reinforcing their confidence and their ability in learning.**

Meanwhile, students who exhibit outstanding performance in core subjects are recommended to join the Chinese Enhancement Programme, English Enhancement Programme and Maths Programme to optimise their strengths. While the **flexible course design** allows the fast learners to acquire knowledge that are not covered in the regular lessons **at different paces and levels within a small group setting**, the broadly-based curriculum also provides them with a host of stimulating learning experiences to **enhance their interest and enthusiasm in learning.**

Moreover, placing a great deal of importance on safeguarding a smooth transition between Kindergarten and Primary School / Primary School and Secondary School, we have carried out the following measures:

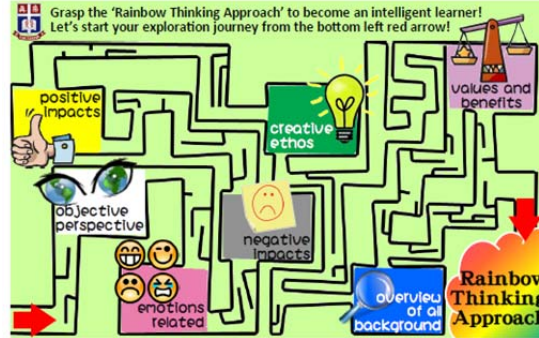
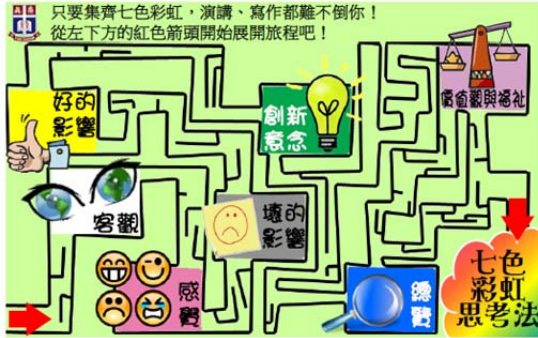
- (i) To help the toddlers overcome the separation anxiety that usually accompanies their first few days of school, we arrange the 'Parent-Child Pre-kindergarten Class' which is specially crafted for the new students of the coming school year. This parent-child course aims at providing the parents and their children with fun and interactive learning experiences, helping the young learners to adapt to new school life before the school commences.
- (ii) We believe that facilitating a smooth transition and continuity between Kindergarten and Primary School is crucial to children's development. Therefore, our Chinese, English and Mathematics curriculum development divisional heads from Primary sections have been maintaining a close collaboration with our Kindergarten sections administration heads, advancing our curriculum design and teaching modes from time to time.
- (iii) We also offer the 'Happy Adaptation to JP1' programme to students who will be going up to Primary One. Designed and conducted by our experienced teachers, the programme is bound to consolidate students' learning and assist them in overcoming possible learning difficulties they may face in JP1 by means of interactive teaching and revision.
- (iv) Before unveiling their new chapter of school life in the Secondary School, JP6 graduates will be required to attend the 'JP6 to S1 Bridging Course' during the summer holiday, so that they can be further endowed with the necessary skills and knowledge to study in the Secondary School.

3.3 Learning how to learn

Learning is not merely memorising sets of facts or being able to recite a list of data in a superficial way. **Learning is more about 'learning how to learn'**. To that end, I am active in attending a diversity of educational seminars, exchange forums and talks to keep in line with the current teaching and learning development. Whenever I have acquired some practical and useful teaching skills, I will share the knowledge with my staff members and students, making sure the effective teaching approaches are put in place. For instance, the '5W1H' cards and 'Rainbow Thinking Approach' cards were printed out for students place in their student ID card holders, so that they could use the cards to construct conversations accordingly. **The two cards have proven to be some prominent tools for learning, functioning as guidelines for students to memorise facts, express themselves, organize their ideas, understand what they are learning and stimulate their inquisitiveness even better.**



‘5W1H’ card



‘Rainbow Thinking Approach’ card

4. Spurring teachers on to educate and care for their students with earnestness

Like many educators, we believe that catering for children’s emotional needs pave the way for their enjoyable learning experiences. For this reason, we are committed to building a sense of belonging to school among pupils. This has resulted in the School being selected as the ‘Caring School’ by Hong Kong Christian Service in 2013-2014. Efforts are underway to cultivate a loving and caring atmosphere at school based on the following two principles:

The first is to raise the staff members’ awareness of the importance of **offering necessary pastoral care and support to our students**, followed by giving guidance on the application. Listed below are the measures being adopted at school:

- (i) We recruit staff members on the basis of education, experience and passion for children. Only with great enthusiasm for children will they have an **intrinsic motivation** to overcome the obstacles in front of them.
- (ii) Through holding weekly prayer meetings and monthly fellowships for our staff members, we aim at filling our staff members’ souls with faith in God, as well as praying for the colleagues and pupils in need. By doing so, we believe that **emotional bonds and mutual support** will gradually develop among them and that our teachers will **truly listen to their students’ needs**.
- (iii) Our School-based Educational Psychologist will give talks to our teachers in a regular basis to equip them with necessary skills to cater for students’ learning and emotional needs.
- (iv) Since close communications and collaboration between parents and the school can contribute to a better understanding of children’s performance and needs, establishing a collaborative parent-teacher relationship is paramount. Hence, our Enhancement Programme instructors will conduct parent-teacher conferences to keep parents informed of their children’s learning progress. Our teachers will also call the parents and pay home visits to better tailor their support and guidance to the families’ needs through discussions and observations.

- (v) The EDB Student Guidance Officer and School-based Educational Psychologist will provide professional and ongoing psychological services and support to our students.

Next is to **listen to and show respect for students**. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, students are able to express their opinions on learning and teaching, school environment and school policy during the Early Morning Open Forum at 7:25a.m.-7:40a.m. This practice not only fosters school development, it also engages our young minds in two-way discussions on a regular basis.

5. Conclusion: Moral, academic and emotional supports are keys to enjoyable learning

Whether from the research result of my thesis, or my teaching and administrative experience during the 20 years in Tsung Tsin, I am convinced that moral education, academic qualifications and teachers' enthusiasm in teaching will pose a far-reaching and profound influence on children's growth and development. Therefore, we spare no effort to **stimulate students' curiosity and inquisitiveness in learning** through ample, diverse support and encouragement, so that they can **thrive and achieve their full potential with a strong sense of belonging to Tsung Tsin**.