

IMPLEMENTING AN ELEVEN YEAR THROUGH-TRAIN MODEL TO COMPLETE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION: CREATING A PLATFORM FOR ACCOMMODATING THE NEWEST PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND TECHNOLOGIES IN SCHOOL

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Under the spotlight of the world on 1st July, 1997, the sovereignty of Hong Kong was returned to the People's Republic of China (PRC) after 99 years of colonial ruling by the British Government. Immediately after the handover, the new Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China launched a series of measures and reforms to actualize the ideology of "One Country, Two Systems". Among those changes, the education reform has received the greatest allocation of fiscal money to bring about a holistic review of the educational system. The curriculum reform, especially, was undertaken to respond to the substantial changes in economic structure of the contemporary Hong Kong and its inclination to develop itself into a knowledge-based society.

Under the educational reform, government has set green light on different valuable and innovative initiatives developed by individual schools. This provides ample *space* for developments in the school-based curriculum. Logos Academy of Hong Kong has grasped this opportunity and valuable autonomy provided by the government -- to develop a broad and balanced school-based curriculum through its 11-year "Through-train" program. This model is vital to keep learning abreast with the momentum of global developments.

One of the prerequisites in achieving these aims is to create sufficient *space* for both schools and teachers. If the structure of the school curriculum is packed with conventional subjects, and the pedagogies teachers adopted in classrooms remain unchanged, the opportunities of actualizing these overarching aims in the reform would be very slim. In addition, if some prescribed texts and textbooks are kept and used as the main source of learning materials in daily teaching practices, there will be little room for the introduction of updated learning materials. With such concerns set in mind, creating *space* to bring about genuine and meaningful learning to take place has become vital.

From the beginning of Early Learning Stages, teachers will ensure that the curriculum designed allows total learning experiences to take place. Here, total learning experiences refer to the fundamental knowledge and skills that one should be equipped. The design of a school-based curriculum should be dynamic, novel and authentic.

In this connection, Logos Academy has started to create space in two aspects: to accommodate for new learning areas, and to use the most updated technologies for learning.

In developing the school-based curriculum, in pace with the interest and abilities of the children, several new Learning Areas are introduced. This includes Family Life Education, Media / New Media Education, MegaSkills, Cultural Studies, and Analytical Studies of Current Issues. As

these new learning areas are introduced, it delimits the scope of some conventionally prescribed texts and syllabuses.

In each of the Learning Areas, teachers are responsible to design different level- and age-appropriate activities and assignments that encourage the mastery of basic concepts and development of aesthetic appreciation, civic and moral education, physique building and inquiry / research skills. Moreover, integrated tasks and projects intertwining with different study skills are mounted to enable children to experiment creative designs and try out increasingly complex investigations.

For example, in Media Education, the 6-year-olds are taught to take snapshots of the environment around them. Having mastered the skills of using the camera, children feel free and competent to use their own cameras in different functions and occasions, e.g. in the 2004 School Christmas Party.

Family Life Education is a learning area which comes about with the strong belief that the quality of a child's family life is vital and fundamental for contributing to his/her ability to cope with both social changes and relationships in society as a citizen, spouse or parent in future. For example, with plenty of authentic examples and hands-on work provided, the 6-year old children learn about the positions and functions of different parts of their body, and how to lead a healthy life.

We believe that early exposure to different updated learning areas is essential in nurturing our students into self-reflective and self-motivated learners. Moreover, students learn to express their own feelings and thoughts via different channels such as photographs, pictures, stage performances, etc. Different kinds of informal performances, like fashion shows, drama and musicals are incorporated into the school's co-curricula activities. Through active participation, the children's interest towards arts and self-motivated learning can be cultivated. Such an open curriculum framework does allow the accumulation of positive learning experiences, and drives the students for further explorations on their interests and thus gradually nurturing them to become self-directed learners. Thus all our updated learning areas in the School have been very well-received by both the students and parents.

On the other hand, our school also creates new platforms to use the newest technologies which facilitate the effectiveness of learning and teaching in three stages : For pre-lesson use, for lesson use, and for post-lesson use.

In school, our teachers are used to use the computers and other technologies for retrieving information, communication and preparing for the courseware and learning materials before the lessons.

For lesson use, the introduction of Large Projection Units and the *interactive* electronic whiteboard is a breakthrough of some conventional teacher-directed classes. In our school, Large Projection Unit is a basic equipment used in the classrooms. It allows teachers to use various kinds of audio and visual aids and on-line programs comprehensively to conduct the lessons. It may also be used in conjunction with the campus TV unit to enable the students to broadcast their production accordingly.

The whiteboard allows the interactive delivery of animated learning to the students by using the large projected interface. The use of this whiteboard also helps to cater for different learning needs. It is observed that the use of this interactive whiteboard raises the level of participation of the students. It is particularly appealing to those with shorter attention span and those who require more graphical representation in learning. With the incorporation of this new technology, the learning needs of students with different learning styles can be better catered.

In order to facilitate better communication among parents, teachers and the school, a total of more than 30 **Open Class sessions** have been scheduled throughout the academic year. This enables the parents to observe real-time the classes in progress. Dome Cameras will be installed in the classrooms, taking snapshots of the activities in the classroom from different angles simultaneously. Parents will thus have a better understanding of classroom learning and may find it easier to work in collaboration with the school.

To enhance the use of interactive tools to facilitate learning in class, the school will use the **Personal Response System** (PRS) to tally the responses of the children in the classroom instantly. In a conventional classroom, hardly can teachers gather information about the learning outcomes without aid. With the use of the PRS, as soon as the students press the response buttons, the teachers can obtain the analyzed results of the different answers to the questions asked. Hence, the teachers may obtain some spontaneous feedback about the learning outcomes of the students. In an interactive learning situation, the response system serves as a good aid to guarantee a more satisfactory learning and teaching process in the lessons, serves as a good stimulus and provides a more joyful way for the children to express their choice and thoughts.

In Logos Academy, we are considering some new platforms for the post-lesson use of new technologies – for giving out assignments, reporting, and communicating with the parents, etc.

With the use of the newest technology in learning, it is expected that the effectiveness of integrated study skills, self-directed learning, team work and social interaction will be greatly enhanced. On the one hand, our teachers are committed to facilitate change, reflect on current practices, and explore further improvements in new learning areas and use of new technologies — a dynamic process of school-based curriculum development based on a shared appreciation of problems, using collaborative strategies, reviewing and evaluating to modify and enhance curriculum designs and use of equipment effectively – giving a systematic way of empowering teachers to address new challenges. On the other hand, the horizons of the children have been extended, from local to the global, and strengthened by the curriculum vigor within them..

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