

## **Other Learning Experiences: a reason for being Professor John MacBeath University of Cambridge**

Other Learning Experiences became an embedded element in the New Secondary Curriculum in the school year 2009-2010. It had been in gestation and piloting more than three years prior to that. During that period considerable intelligence had been gathered as to opportunities and obstacles, myths and misunderstandings. There was much encouragement to be had from leading edge practice in schools which had not only grasped the concept but shown how it could be realised in day-to-day practice.

Its roots in policy and practice are longer and date back to beginning of the decade with the publication of by Curriculum Development Council in 2001 and 2002 placing emphasis on whole person development and life long learning. Five essential learning experiences – Aesthetic Development, Physical Development, Moral and Civic Education, Intellectual development, Community Service and Career-related Experiences.

Broadening the agenda from examination-directed activities and pressures, students' all-round development as lifelong learners, would achieve outcomes such as:

- developing God-given talents;
- becoming active, informed and responsible citizens;
- developing respect for plural values and interests in the arts;
- adopting a healthy lifestyle; and
- enhancing career aspirations and positive work ethics.

405 hours would be devoted to curricular time, with Physical Development and Aesthetic Development occupying 10% of the 15% allocated time.

The pilot Project, *Quality Life-wide Learning* was put in place in 2005 to explore quality practice in school-based Life-wide Learning (LWL) with encouragement for the sharing of leading edge practice among project schools. The success of this in primary schools gave the impetus for its extension to the secondary sector. *The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education - Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong (2005)* laid the foundation in the assessment system, replacing the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination, with the new Hong Kong Diploma of School Education (HKDSE) to be administered by the Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). It also put in place a Senior Secondary Student Learning Profile (SLP) which would give status to the range of activities and achievements outcomes in whole person development. The SLP is designed to be both a formative process and a passport for entry into the world of work, further education and training. A key purpose is to furnish employers and higher education institutions with a more rounded picture of student's abilities and dispositions, extending beyond performance in tests and examinations. In September 2009 this became a reality with the implementation of the New Secondary Structure.

## **Piloting progress and impact**

The first short pilot study commissioned in 2007 was designed to:

- conduct an intensive short research study to identify the nature and impact of leadership in the effective provision of OLE in Hong Kong schools
- comment on the embedding of the Student Profile in New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum, identifying potential strengths and area for development
- provide an initial report summarising leadership practices among seed schools

This pilot study involved visits to schools, interviews and focus groups with head teachers, teachers, students, OLE coordinators, Arts Education teachers as well as with members of the Life-wide Learning and Library Section and other relevant EDB staff at that time. This emanated in a written report, discussed and revised after consultation with EDB staff. It reported in November 2007. The focus of the study was with the questions:

*What are the success factors for effective partnership strategy in offering quality learning OLE Community Service/Career-related Experiences opportunities at student learning, teacher learning and systemic learning levels?*

To answer this question, this initial stage of the project involved background reading, including documentation provided by previous evaluations and presentations to schools together with focus groups discussions. Groups were drawn from schools, universities and youth agencies as well as from members of the CDI/OLE team. Focus group discussions took place with staff and students from 7 seed schools, comprising:

- 26 Students
- 23 Teachers
- 5 Senior leaders
- 8 representatives of external agencies

Plus

- 7 EDB officers and school personnel in a half day open session

A report was presented in November 2007. This was followed by a second study, conducted between 2008 and 2010, exploring these emerging issues in greater depth and following the progress of schools in implementing OLE over the course of three separate visits to Hong Kong in August 2009 and March 2010. By August 2009 schools were on the verge of the new curriculum and changed Senior Secondary School Structure and by March 2010 the NSS had become a reality.

These occasions offered opportunities for further visits to schools, not only chosen because they were in the forefront of development but also on the basis of their willingness to discuss challenges they faced in accommodating OLE within the New Senior Secondary Curriculum. The need for professional development was a common and overriding concern.

These latter visits included extended discussions with:

- Senior leadership teams
- OLE coordinators
- Panel chairs across a range of subjects
- Students from classes at every level

Plus:

- Observation in classes
- Feedback and discussion with members of the Life-wide Learning team
- Workshops with teachers, OLE coordinators, head teachers in which feedback was given and issues identified

### **OLE: Hong Kong at the leading edge**

The phrase ‘intensification of schooling’ has wide international currency as schools around the world experience the pressure to raise standards and compete for a place in the international league tables, produced in different forms by OECD, UNESCO and UNICEF. Policy makers are constantly looking over their shoulder at who is behind and seek to close the gap with those who are in front. Intensification expresses itself in schools in an expanding curriculum, more testing, increased accountability, for teaching staff longer working hours, deteriorating working life balance and, in many cases, decreasing job satisfaction.

Intensification can, however, be counter productive. Major efforts are invested in pushing and coaxing students into higher performance on high stakes examinations at the expense of deep learning and breadth of interest and commitment. Attainment standards may rise but without sustainability in the longer term. It is common for universities to complain that students arrive with good grades but without the independent learning skills and breadth required to make the most of a university education which is more than just bookish pursuits. There is life after university in a world of rapid and unpredictable change where people can expect five or more jobs in a lifetime, many not yet invented.

The need for ‘other’ kinds of learning experiences is widely accepted as the complement to the academic press, not simply as relief from study but because learning experiences beyond the curriculum feed into and enhance achievement and also broaden and expand horizons. These are individual benefits but education is not all about consumption. It is a moral enterprise in which values and virtues of looking beyond self, of making a contribution, of being a good citizen, of sensitivity and concern for the needs of others ought not simply to be extolled but practised.

A number of years ago Mary Alice White wrote:

Imagine yourself on a ship sailing across an unknown sea, to an unknown destination. An adult would be desperate to know where he is going. But a child only knows he is going to school...The chart is neither available nor understandable to him... Very quickly, the daily life on board ship becomes all important ... The daily chores, the demands, the inspections, become the reality, not the voyage, nor the destination. (*Mary Alice White, 1971*)

To what extent is this true forty years later? To what extent is this true for children and young people growing up and going to school in Hong Kong? To what extent do they have a map of the learning territory, a view of the destination and a compass by which to navigate their ways through the considerable challenges that the journey entails?

Why do so many children fail to find their ways? And why do so many find their ways over the tactical hurdles of school but never really acquire the habits of good learners, trusted colleagues and valued contributors to the welfare of others? Peter Senge once wrote 'nothing fails like success'. What he meant was that high achievers could be so handicapped by their complete focus on 'doing well' (as measured by tests and examinations) that they had never stopped to reflect critically on the value and transferability of their learning.

Numerous researchers have identified the 'performativity' and learning gap. As Harvard researchers such as Howard Gardner and David Perkins have demonstrated, it is possible to perform well but never really engage with deep learning. 'Surface learning' is a term used to describe acquisition of information that lacks deep roots, nor is nourished by the breadth of learning that makes connections between the 'real world' and the virtual world of knowledge reproduction.

Universities and employers share some concerns about the narrowness of many students who may be subject smart but not at all smart when it comes to independent thought, initiative, critical analysis, creativity and teamwork and social relationships - those things that ultimately matter once much of the subject content has been left behind and what has been taught is too shallow roots to be learned.

### **From theory to practice**

In a climate of competition and intensification the introduction of OLE is unlikely to be simply welcomed, accepted and implemented. It is not only that it is a change, which is of itself rarely welcomed, but in some respects a radical change, requiring a reorientation of priorities, planning, resourcing and manpower. It comes at a time when schools are adjusting to the new secondary structure and OLE can too easily be seen as just one more initiative to be accommodated among many others.

So what we have learned from the three years or so of piloting and the impact of going to scale?

The first study charted some of the misunderstandings and confusion as to what OLE was and what purposes it served, for example:

- ECA under another name
- Subjects other than the academic subjects
- Activities that take place out of the classroom/out of school
- Activities that require students to take responsibility for their own learning
- Activities that provide the bridge between the subject and non-subject learning
- 'Any learning in any form that will inspire students'

It was also described simply as learning which is 'lifewide' and 'lifelong'. While the emphasis on breadth and longevity does in fact lie at the heart of OLE there may be

an implicit assumption that other school subjects and activities are not life enhancing and lifelong too. The corollary is that OLE exists in an 'other' world of its own, detached and practical as against theoretical, relevant as against 'academic'.

However, OLE extends beyond, but includes, subjects. Its theoretical content is often implicit and at its best it makes high demands on young people, pushing them out of their comfort zone. It is individual but embedded in a social context, including, but also going beyond, school and classroom. It has a present focus and long term objective with the purpose of developing skills and dispositions that transcend the context in which they are acquired, so as to be applied lifelong as well as lifewide.

While two of the components, Visual Arts and Music are timetabled and classroom-based (or perhaps studio based) subjects they also require out-of-school experiences such as visiting art galleries, studios, exhibitions, attending concerts or competing in festivals and competitions.

OLE is, in fact, not a new invention. Visits, exchanges, camps, games and simulations, aesthetic, creative and sporting activities, student-led and group-led learning have a long history in Hong Kong and elsewhere. However, they have tended to be seen as discrete activities, often marginal to the 'real' and 'serious' work of the schools and so accorded a low status in the hierarchy of educational priorities. What is new is a policy aimed at raising the status of such activities, no longer to be voluntary but in common with any other 'serious' pursuit a core part of the educational experience. Allocating 15% of curriculum time as mandatory is a signal that OLE stands, in fact, for 'Vital' learning experiences.

Hong Kong is confronted with the problem that is common to many countries of the world, that is, the almost inverse relationship between what is measured and what is valued. For students, however enjoyable and fulfilling their informal learning, it is not, in the final analysis what really counts. It is a message reinforced almost on a daily basis by their teachers, their parents and their peers. So, the values of lifelong learning that we all aspire to get short changed because they prove to be too difficult to control, to measure and to validate.

There is an inherent danger in setting up an antithesis between academic achievement in the mainstream subjects and the more experiential activities of OLE. There is an equal danger, and more insidious, danger of OLE being adopted ritualistically and reluctantly to satisfy an external requirement, so devaluing its purpose and impact. The value of OLE lies in the synergy that is created between the 85 and 15 per cent of time so that such an artificial and arbitrary distinction disappears and the school experience becomes, for students, one of seamless learning. That is, after all, what is intended by Whole-Person Development!

OLE builds on major findings of research in the last decade which affirms the integral relationship between physical and psychological health, diet and exercise, mind and body. This strand of research has been complemented by studies into thinking skills, creativity, multiple intelligences and learning styles/preferences, all of which point to the dysfunction that occurs when we try to separate and compartmentalise thinking and feeling, doing and being.

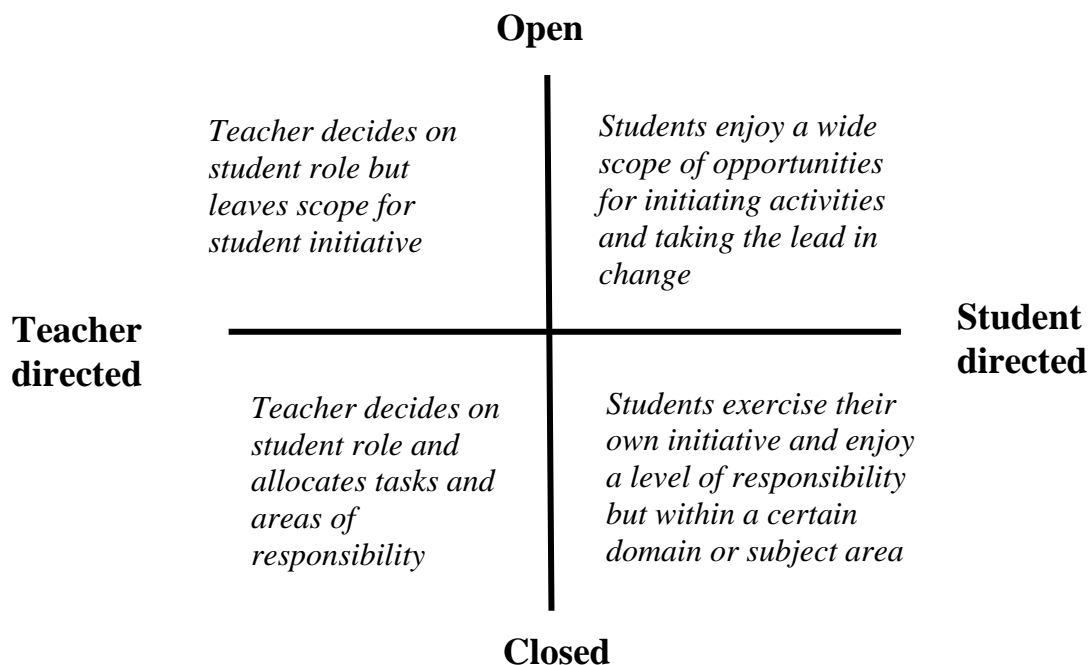
### **Pathways to student leadership**

One of the aims of OLE is to help students develop self confidence, a sense of their own agency, their accountability to others, and a willingness to exercise leadership on their own and other's behalf. A range of differing pathways exists for these aims to be realised in practice.

- Through opportunities to initiate and carry through their own ideas (e.g. suggesting and initiating a new club or activity)
- Planning, organising and implementing an event (e.g. planning a drama production or TV programme)
- Being allocated responsibility for schools and classroom tasks (e.g. having a role as homework coordinator)
- Through community services (e.g. working with the elderly or young children)
- Through classroom activities in which leadership opportunities are embedded (e.g. students acting as MCs in English)

These various approaches to encouraging student leadership are not equivalent, however, in the respect of the genuine leadership opportunities they offer. They are set within different kinds of boundaries and legitimisation. They have to be tested by the 'agency' they allow, in other words, - How much latitude and empowerment is there for students to make autonomous decisions, to make mistakes, to challenge, to take risks to take responsibility for one's own actions? How fertile is the environment, in school or outside school, to take risks?

The following matrix, prompted by examples from schools visited, offers a protocol for planning and/or evaluating the impact of differing OLE activities.



A framework such as this can also be used by teachers and students to consider where they lie on the spectrum and how they might move along that spectrum to be more adventurous and autonomous.

Examples cited by young people included problem solving activities such as constructing a roller coaster in the course of a Disneyland workshop, an activity which tested their understanding of Physics; and an extension of a Biology lesson identifying and photographing butterflies ‘in the wild’ and then uploading and categorising these in students’ SLP. One of the most empowering and career relevant activities described was the mini company, an 18 week programme for 25 S6 students taking them through the whole gamut of human resources management, planning, finance, running meetings, exercising leadership and practising a whole range of inter-personal skills which cross career and academic boundaries.

### **Skills and values learned as cited by young people**

In November 2007, in the course of focus groups with students asked to draw a time line of high and low points in their school learning, they took the exercise very seriously and it led to an illuminating discussion on why they had all selected activities which were outside of subject learning, mainly because of the social and active participative nature of the experience.

Four students (Stone, Sausage, Danon and Brian) provided evidence of the success of the programme, describing how they have learned to accept others’ ideas, their development of self reliance and self discovery, their team working and dealing with people, time management, leadership abilities, their ability to deal with challenging situations, perseverance and dealing with setbacks and self presentation in interview, skills they had learned from mentors and visiting business people as well as through school experience which afforded them the challenges and the means to address them (OLE by any other name).

A list of skills, capacities and dispositions engendered by OLE ranged across a wide field:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-operating with others, working in a team</li> <li>• Being open to differing perspectives, learning to accept others’ ideas</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Communication - listening</li> <li>• Trusting and being trusted</li> <li>• Having responsibility</li> <li>• Solving a problem</li> <li>• Caring for others, respecting life</li> <li>• Making a contribution, making a difference to the school or community</li> <li>• Facing a challenge, ability to cope with difficult situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning occupational, and career-related skills</li> <li>• Organisational skills</li> <li>• Development of self reliance and self discovery</li> <li>• Dealing with people</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Leadership abilities</li> <li>• Perseverance and dealing with setbacks</li> <li>• Self presentation</li> <li>• Interview skills</li> <li>• Gaining self confidence</li> <li>• Being accepted and applauded</li> <li>• A sense of accomplishment and pride</li> </ul>
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Asked to identify their least and most enjoyable and useful learning experiences on a 4 point scale, those which were given a 1 (the lowest grade) referred to lessons :

- dominated by teacher talk
- which did not allow student-student interaction
- predominantly focused on writing, copying or note taking

And talks by visiting speakers which were seen as:

- too long and uninspiring
- having no relevance to students' career choices
- having little intrinsic interest

Those given a 4 as enjoyable and memorable learning experiences were described as:

- taking place in sites out of school
- requiring active participation or problem solving
- engaging students' interest and abilities
- related to career or life beyond school

From students' perspectives, what emerges quite clearly is the power of learning which transcends the boundaries of classroom and builds bridges between experiences in and out of school. However, these can easily dissipate when there is neither focus nor scaffolding, two essential ingredients which maximize the experience. As noted in documentation prior to this visit, this is a challenging area for teachers for whom it requires breaking new ground. All teachers' pre-service training has prepared them for teaching within the given parameters of the classroom and learning. To teach in more fluid and less structured environments is, for many, a skill still to be acquired. In this respect youth, community and social workers have much to contribute as this is their milieu and source of expertise.

A student in one of the focus groups talked about how difficult she found it to try and learn from text books, sources which, she felt, could neither give the insight or spark the imagination that can be gained from first hand experience in 'real life' settings. Another student wrote:

“It's very boring for students forced to memorise history. That way they can't learn the lessons of history”

By contrast others spoke of the living history that they learned from elderly people in the community and from visits to other countries. Students who spoke of visits and exchanges with schools in mainland China invariably described these as having a major impact on attitudes and understanding - cultural and historical. While 'there is no substitute for experience', opportunities for extensive travel are necessarily limited and not all can benefit from history at first hand although there may be more immediate and accessible community sites that could be better exploited. What emerges from the evidence from students and teachers is that when those first hand experiences are available, they help students reconnect with the history of classroom



and text book. Nor should students deprived of opportunities beyond the classroom be deprived of vicarious travel experiences which imaginative pedagogy can offer.

This quest for sites beyond the classroom is endorsed by a substantial body of research which tells us that *where* you learn - the context of the activity - has a very significant impact on how the dispositional and cognitive aspects of learning become conjoined. Museums, theme parks, airports, bus stations, hotels, street markets, universities can become what Weiss and Fine term 'construction sites', that is places where young people construct their thinking (and feeling) but most powerfully when the experience is suitably scaffolded to maximize and focus the quality and transferability of the learning.

The key to transfer of learning is a metacognitive awareness, of learning how to learn. The challenge this presents for teachers or coordinators of OLE is to both prepare well and follow up meaningfully on career-related experiences and community service. The evidence is that work experience can be a lost opportunity and community services a ritual compliance - serving tea to old ladies or selling flags. These activities have little intrinsic merit unless they are underpinned by the personal and vocational value that counts for young people. Social and moral credit are likely to be a valued currency for only some young people.

Community service is an integral component of OLE but may easily be seen as an add-on, as something simply to be done and noted. Schools need to be able to have access to examples of how these activities can be given more 'bite' and salience. We were given the example of flag day as enhancing communication skills (approaching people, people from another country, another language), similarly with the visually impaired and the elderly, there were life skills to be acquired in communication, listening and empathy, for example.

How to articulate how these skills and dispositions so that they feed back into their subject learning and their recording of achievements will remain a major challenge. Entries to students' SLP which are succinct and meaningful will require the guidance of teachers who grasp the significance and the strategy. Selling flags on the street may, for example, be just a tiresome activity, or it may be given substance in terms of personal and social development and career-related skills. Success in flag selling requires:

- Some basic understanding of social psychology, how people behave and what motivates them to buy or refuse a flag
- Personal and social skills such as eye contact, inviting and non-threatening body language, language register and tone of voice, dress and demeanour
- Self belief and self confidence

These are skills that can be learned and can also be practised in different settings such a drama and role play in school and well structured experiences in business contexts. Shadowing can be either painful and pointless, or a rich focused experience on key elements of the job in question. Mock interviews are only as good as their explicit purpose and the relevance they have for young people who take part in them. With a recognition of these factors, there is evidence to suggest (both from international studies and from students in focus groups) that well organized and purposeful

placements in business or community settings can generate high levels of self confidence and increase engagement and achievement in academic work.

The example of cleaning up a beach, mentioned by students in interviews, can be used to demonstrate the potential for deep learning to take place, both in preparation and follow up of the activity.

### **Cleaning up a beach**

- What do you know about how beaches are made?
- What is the ecology of a beach?
- How long has the beach been there?
- What was it before it was a beach?
- What is beach made of –animal, vegetable and mineral?
- What kind of detritus finds its way on to a beach?
- What are the sources? Man made or natural?
- How do natural sources of detritus get there?
- How could you classify different kinds of litter?
- What kinds of litter are biodegradable?
- In what ways can litter be a health hazard? Why?
- How is litter disposed of? Where does it go?
- What are the effects on the environment?
- Why do people drop litter?
- What kinds of action could be taken to prevent people dropping litter?
- What works best in shaping human behaviour – reward or sanction?

### **Independent and inter-dependent learners**

A major purpose of OLE is for students to become not only independent, but inter-dependent, learners. This involves a transition from being told and directed to assuming responsibility and self reliance. This doesn't happen, however, without structure and sequence. Teachers interviewed described it as a long term struggle to help young people become less dependent on their teachers and to believe that they could exercise choice and agency.

Students, for their part, spoke of challenges which they had had to face without an adequate form of support. An example many cited was of transitions – to a new school, to new friends, in some cases to a new country. Students spoke of finding out through experience, sometimes painful, of how to adapt to different cultures, different language, differing expectations. Such transitions could be seen as something to go through with minimal loss of confidence or as part of a powerful lifewide learning opportunity. Students also spoke of the challenge of examinations which could be seen as a period of intensive subject cramming or in terms of a range of strategic and study skills such as time management, prioritisation, sharing knowledge and technique, pacing and exercise and generating self confidence.

Senior students also described progress through to the final years of school when the curriculum narrows and becomes more 'serious'. However, if OLE genuinely plays a role in enhancing of skills, self confidence, time management and meeting challenges then it may be counter productive to abandon this aspect at a time when students face the most demanding and high stakes tasks of their school career. The transition from

being told and directed to assuming responsibility and self reliance doesn't happen without structure and sequence. In a school for example, the English teacher, Paul, described it as a long term struggle to help these young people become less dependent and to believe that they can exercise choice and agency.

## **Making the connections**

### **Biology**

The biology teacher brings the outside world into the classroom through practical activities which have immediate relevance to students' lives but with clear theoretical underpinning. Dealing with heat stroke is an example. Students interview victims of heat stroke, identify conditions and causes and discuss preventative strategies. In the teacher's words they become 'little scientists', paying attention to evidence, cause and effect, physiology and emotional responses to bodily changes. They also acquire communication skills, in interviewing, listening, questioning, probing as well as collecting and dealing with information.

Field camps, or study camps also provide opportunities for a range of skills to be exercised. Over a three day period, students will study streams, mangroves and grasslands as an integral element of their biology curriculum but will, perhaps even more significantly, be learning to live together, to practice tolerance and understanding, to work in teams, to apply their social and academic skills in a less structured and directed context.

### **English**

English provides immense scope for creative activity which extends the use of language in a range of contexts but also achieves a number of key OLE objectives. This is achieved through activities such as 'cartoon doubling', providing scripts for cartoons, designing adverts, practising spoken English in a variety of real life situations with native speakers. This is realised both by taking students out to meet, and to converse with, English speakers in a variety of contexts, but also bringing in speakers to school. An example offered is the visits to the school by Chunky Onion, a drama group who perform in the school in English. Having watched the drama presentation, students interview the characters and organise a tea party in which they hold more informal social conversations with the cast.

There is premium on collaboration with outside organisations so that students are able to use their language with people from different walks of life and occupations in authentic situations. In organising events in the school which bring in outside bodies, students have opportunities to act as Masters of Ceremony (MCs), requiring not only spoken skills in English but offering opportunities to play an organisational and leadership role.

### **Music**

Music provides opportunities for students not only to develop instrumental skills but also to perform on stage and to work together in the production of a musical event in front of an audience. The creation, rather than simply reproduction, of music is a key element so students are stimulated by television advertisements taped by the teacher and by cartoons which provide a backdrop for students to create their own soundtrack.

Working in groups and using 'Finale' software they are able to access different notes and combinations of notes to compose their own tunes. 'Everybody can compose' says the Music teacher, giving them a sense of accomplishment even though only a minority will go on to be specialised in Music.

Collaboration with Visual Arts brings together art and music so that depiction of social life can be portrayed through drawing with a musical accompaniment. Students' own cartoons or drawings of, for example, a farmer in mainland China are given depth and authenticity through research on the Internet. This helps to dispel some of the stereotypes that students bring to their visual and musical composition, so that an OLE aspect of Music is to develop wider and more nuanced insight and understanding of the social and economic world.

### **The Student Learning Profile**

The Student Learning profile (SLP) is a key component of OLE but, like the concept itself, is problematic in translating it into practice.

SLP is a summary record of what students achieve, in terms of their whole-person development (other than their results of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination) during the senior secondary (SS) years. The purpose of SLP is to provide supplementary information on secondary school leavers' competencies and specialties, in order to give a fuller picture of the students.

(A quote from Booklet 5B, one of the series of 12 booklets in EDB's Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide)

The Student Learning Profile is a vital part of the OLE story. It returns us to the question of the quality of students' learning. How meaningless would it be for students to go through their school career without having an overview of their learning? Without an ability to document and evaluate their experiences? Without monitoring their progress their setbacks and their achievements? Should a learning profile be seen a distraction, a necessary chore, or does the facility with it lie at the very core of what it means to be a good student?

While the SLP has been envisaged as a strategic tool to overlay the whole curriculum, not just OLE, and to help bring coherence to students' understanding of their learning and progress in a holistic way, this was not understood by students interviewed. Most were surprised by the suggestion that the SLP could also apply to academic subjects. The reference by some students to the SLP as a 'Self Learning Project' illustrates some of the confusion, not only of students but of some of their teachers too.

Its purposes are made clear in documentation and in many workshops and seminars organised to clear the fog of confusion and misconception. Its potential uses serve a number of different ends.

- A user-friendly way of reflecting on and recording learning, success and difficulties
- A 'report card' providing a summary of what has been learned, with summative assessment by the teacher

- A form of blog through which students express their thoughts and feelings share ideas, comment on one another's work
- A joint activity in which students discuss and share ideas and then record insight from their shared deliberations
- A mechanism through which learning may transfer from one context to another

The SLP asks student to describe an activity and, as a follow up question to analyse:

What did you learn from the above activity? (150 words)  
(Intellectually/academically/spiritually/ethically)

This is, for most students, a highly demanding task. It presupposes an ability to reflect on the process of learning, to have access to a descriptive and analytic vocabulary. These are crucial skills to be acquired through guidance, example and practice. What abilities does it require to be able to evaluate not only the *what* but the *how* of learning, because it is *how* that travels and provides the key to success in university and in work whether as employee or employer. Where there is reluctance among students, and their teachers, about having to reflect on learning, it says something about the perceived nature and purpose of the task and how it has been communicated. A reluctant student, difficult to persuade of the need to make an entry on an SLP, may nonetheless go home and spend hours on written description and evaluation of some of the day's activities via the medium of email, text, Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. Powerful experiences in community, or career-related experiences are likely to evoke a similar impulse to record or to communicate them.

Yet, as we know from many research studies which have asked teachers to maintain a log or diary, even with them there is rapid process of attrition and most fail to keep the discipline of regular entry. It is clear that the same happens with students and it falls to teachers to keep reminding, cajoling and nagging their students to fill in the forms. This is because, as teachers report, most students don't enjoy this activity. So, instead of expending energy to get students to engage in an uncongenial activity, imaginative teachers have experimented with different ways of using the SLP.

Rather than simply adopting the SLP mechanism as a ritual from filling, there were schools in this study that emphasised the time need to give thoughtful consideration to how best to capture students' experience and record it purposefully. In one, the experience of the first year of using the SLP was that students were chaotic in its use. So, in the second year, it was teacher directed. Now in the third year it is described as 50-50 student-teacher led. There is a lesson here in how to move progressively towards a planned programme of metacognitive skills which help students to reflect on their learning so as it gets to be built in as a regular or embedded feature.

In another school, the teacher collects photographs of activities that students have been engaged in. These are triggers then used as to stimulate young people to remember what they did and what they learned. These are displayed on a board and students write down their reflections on small coloured post-it notes and attach these to the pictures. This is seen as a much more engaging activity than filling out a form (to which many people, not just students appear to have an in-built aversion). Student comments are then transferred to individual student portfolios.

This is one of a number of different ploys that have been tried to circumvent the regular, ritual and sometimes tedious, reflection process. The use in one school of something akin to a 'blog' is an attempt to bring the process closer to something that young people are more likely to recognise and enjoy. Students write their personal thoughts freely and post these for other students to see and comment on.

The challenge for the SLP is to help students see it not as a tedious prescribed duty but as something that is a way of life, a medium of expression which serves the ambitions and hopes that young people have for their future as well as their present. The problem that attends the SLP is that students do not always see it as their own. Because it is prescribed and timetabled and led by teachers it can too easily be seen as yet another form of school busywork. Giving more initiative and creative adventuring to students, working collegially to explore the potential of SLPs, with exemplars of exciting and compelling models, may be one way forward.

The balance of compulsion and voluntarism remains a contested issue. It was expressed by one youth agency worker as 'from nice to have to must do', the 'must do' couched not as compulsion but as an inner drive born from compelling evidence of the 'nice to have'.

### **Thriving on partnerships**

OLE thrives on partnerships with other organisations. Numerous examples were given of ways in which collaboration with external agencies such as Partnerships with the YWCA, the Town Hall (who organise leadership training and China tours), the Mother's Choice parent programme (sex education and drug education run by external experts). These partnerships served a number of valuable purposes:

- Giving students access to the 'real world' and the part that diverse organisations play in making the real world a better place
- Broadening the school's own expertise by drawing on bodies of knowledge and specialist experience which lie outside the school
- Extending career and leisure options by opening students' eyes to opportunities they may never have envisioned and offering at first hand the challenges and satisfactions to be gained from voluntary service or part/full time employment
- Enhancing professional development for teachers by widening their compass and breadth of view

However, what is meant and understood by partnership is not always what one would expect of that notion. Schools often tended to regard partners as 'suppliers' of OLE, rather than as collaborators or 'co-workers'. For many schools, partnership is developed because teachers do not have the specific professional knowledge or expertise and may simply want to reduce their workload. While some of the partnerships entered into appear to be persistent and sustainable, many are improvisational and casual.

It is perhaps endemic to the nature of schools and pressure on them that school leaders generally consider the school own needs and priorities and do not look further to the

needs of the community needs or those of partnering industries/companies. This, therefore, makes it difficult for both parties to arrive at a reciprocal understanding of the partnering programmes/activities to be carried out. There also appears to be a general lack of knowledge on the school's part as to partnering resources that are available. Nor is this helped by the 'tyranny of the urgent' – tests and examinations, 'covering' the curriculum, homework and home study.

As the priority continues to be placed on subject learning and examination results, there is a concomitant reluctance to invest too heavily in Community Service or Career-related Experiences. While there is a widespread belief that there is much to be gained by students from experiences offered through partnering organizations, this is not matched by professional knowledge on how to help students turn experience into learning and how their learning can travel between the school curriculum context and the context of the wider environment. Without this it is challenging for schools to develop sustainable partnerships with the community and the business sector.

An example of transfer (or lack of it) is seen in presentations that students make in front of the whole class and those they make during the course of a job interview. Evidence from some employers involved in the seed project found that students did not fare well in that quite different context, one which required an adaptability and awareness of audience and employer expectations. This was an important insight for schools and teachers involved in the seed project, as it brought into sharp focus the importance of CRE in honing vocational and life skills and enhancing employability.

The challenge of finding enough organisations with which to develop viable partnerships is one that remains, particularly acute for schools in large estates and rural areas without immediate access to commercial and industrial enterprises. Such schools may not have the inner resources or vision to meet the challenge on their own. It is in this respect that partnerships among schools can lead to a sharing and mutual exploration of external resources, helping to map potential sites and people who have something unique to offer to young people.

- Maintaining and developing partnerships with other schools
- Disseminating good ideas and breakthrough practice through the network
- Keeping in touch with the developments at the centre
- Strengthening partnership with existing agencies and developing new ones

These inter-school and inter-agency partnerships also need to keep in the foreground of their work in the following:

- Seeking new ways of informing and engaging parents
- Dispelling perceptions of OLE as extra-curricular activities
- Supporting teachers in incorporating OLE strategies into their practice
- Exploring and extending the boundaries between OLE and academic subjects
- Helping to develop creative approaches to embedding SLP as a student-friendly tool

**The change equation: diligence, dilemma and dissent**

Changing teachers' practice is the policy maker's dilemma. It is possible for change to be mandated with immediate effect but capturing hearts and minds takes somewhat longer. Without a change in attitudes and values, dissent may simply be driven underground and unless the essential rationale and underlying principles have been grasped, changes in practice will always have a ritualistic and superficial quality.

Much of our discussion with teachers and others came back persistently to the force field of countervailing pressures:

- To widen the scope of student activities BUT not at the expense of academic subjects
- To broaden teachers' range of experiences BUT not to increase workload
- To be creative in the use of the Student Learning Profile BUT not if the final product departs from a traditional written formula
- To listen more sensitively to student voice BUT only if teachers or senior leaders deem it be important enough to give it house room
- To re-educate parents BUT only if it doesn't threaten their children's academic success
- To provide enriching experiences for all students BUT only if there are more resources

While these tensions exhibit themselves in many schools there is a powerful message that comes through from principals, teachers, young people and fellow travellers from universities and youth agencies at the leading edge. Their commitment and enthusiasm for OLE shows that change is already on the move and that can work from the bottom up.

Change that works from the bottom up is known as the Pareto Principle or the 'rule of the vital few'. That is, a few people, a few schools, doing something different, something exemplary, can start an epidemic which spreads because of the infectious power of a new approach. Epidemiology is the term used to describe change that travel virus-like from a germ that is so contagious that it catches and spreads. Contagious ideas and behaviours need three things: 1) they need to have right climatic conditions; 2) they need the people who carry the virus; 3) they need the germ of something powerful enough to overcome efforts at immunity. In Everett Rogers' studies of the diffusion of innovation, the 'tipping point' comes when the innovators influence the 'early adopters' who, over time, become the 'early majority'. As the new way of doing things reaches the tipping point the 'late majority' follow. Each adopter's willingness and ability to adopt an innovation depends on five things - awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption.

The epidemiology of change works through strategies such as peer observation, lesson study, collaborative lesson planning, seminars and workshops, mentoring and critical friendship, all of which have been shown to be powerful levers of change in some schools and in some circumstances.

In schools observed during these successive studies between 2007 and 2010, a number of issues emerged as paramount.

## **1. The folklore of 'work' and play'**



Schools have, over the years, managed to dichotomise ‘work’ and ‘play’. These inert ideas are deeply entrenched in school lore and into the mindsets, not only of children but their parents and their teachers, as in: ‘work hard and then you can go out to play’. Core curriculum represents hard ‘work’ while ‘other’ kinds of experiences are seen more like play. It is such a powerful mindset that it will inevitably take a lot, and a lot of time, to eradicate it.

‘Play’ as scholars such as Jerome Bruner describe it, is what all learning should be like. The learning of infants is all playful. Play is the intrinsic nature of learning, manifest in young children’s restless need to explore and test out their implicit theories about the world, about cause and effect. What breaks when you drop it and what doesn’t? What bounces and what simply falls to the ground? What floats and what sinks? Where does the sky end and the sea begin?

But play is also true of scientists at the leading edge of discoveries. Like children and scientists, we learn, we break new intellectual and emotional ground when we ‘play’ with ideas. We ‘play’ in imagination, virtual travel, discovery and inquiry. We can (with inspired teachers) ‘play’ with mathematical puzzles, scientific experiments and literary adventures. Play is exemplified in the creative endeavour of writers, musicians, dramatists, artists and architects. This is not to gainsay the disciplined sometimes pains-taking nature of ‘hard’ work, but without the leavening influence of play, hard work is eventually too hard and too demotivating. A.N. Whitehead’s rhythm of education is one to constantly return to – that learning in whatever domain revolves in recurring cycles of Romance-Precision-Generalisation.

## **2. Learning: return to the first principles**

The challenge for OLE, but more fundamentally for the whole of the curriculum, is to help teachers and students engage in dialogue about learning, reframe and return to the first principles. With a new secondary curriculum, it is an apposite time to revisit the rules of the school game. From square one, day one, the starting point has to be with questions such as:

- What is learning for?
- How do we make our learning meaningful and coherent?
- What routines and techniques help to make learning playful and memorable?
- How can we build a repertoire of *learning how to learn* skills and dispositions?
- How do we pay attention to the rhythm of learning?
- How do we create the best balance between formal and informal learning?
- How can we develop a framework and language of learning that bridges the ‘Romance’ of the activity and the ‘precision’ required to capture and communicate its value?
- How do we ensure a consistency of language and *learning how to learn* principles across subject areas?

## **3. What’s in it for teachers?**

Encouraging students to become more self-directed cannot easily happen in a climate where their teachers do not exhibit the same sense of agency. Teachers’ long hours, self imposed workload, deference to authority all conspire to create a climate of dutiful time serving and leave little room for creativity and imaginative development.

Professional development for teachers, it is widely acknowledged, has to be aimed at giving them more scope and responsibility – what is often described as shared leadership. If student initiative and leadership is to be a genuine goal, then teachers have to know how to play a supportive and challenging role for students in their care.

As teachers explore the potential of OLE, they discover more exciting pedagogy and more imaginative ways of making learning active, interactive and student-led. The distinction between in-classroom and out-of-classroom activities becomes blurred as what happens outside feeds into what happens inside and what happens in the classroom informs and enhances what happens outside it.

OLE gains status and recognition when it is embedded in School Self Evaluation (SSE) and highlighted as a positive strength in External School Review (ESR). It is of critical importance for the embedding and sustainability of OLE that schools include it as an integral component in their SSE and the stories they tell to external review teams. Complementary to this, the OLE team needs to talk to, persuade and run events for QAD so that they are aware of the how much OLE can contribute to their Key Performance Indicators and what they look for in good pedagogy and school improvement.

#### **4. Creating a learning and sharing culture**

In focus groups reference was made to ‘social capital’, something that is a shared commodity among people and, as research constantly shows, is the key ingredient of success. It is founded on trust, a recurring theme among participants in focus groups. Trust is, however, subject to diverse definitions – conditional, calculative, professional or mutual. It cannot be mandated. It can only be gradually won by consistent evidence of trustworthiness and tested by evidence of a genuine reciprocal relationship through which social capital develops. There is an important lesson from external agencies. They cannot expect immediate acceptance from teachers who are likely to resent anyone who has not walked in their shoes or understood the pressures of classroom teaching. They have to exercise patience, to ‘seek first to understand before seeking to be understood’ and build trust from evidence of trustworthiness.

When colleagues freely choose to work together and share experiences it is likely to engender a greater sense of ownership than when simply imposed. Senior leaders acknowledge this and talk of changing the mind set of students but this rests on changing mind sets of teachers and mind sets of parents. One vice-principal with two young children talks of leaving home at 6.30 a.m. and returning at 10 p.m. to see his children before they go to bed! This obviously does not model the kind of mindset he wishes to instil in his staff and students.

#### **5. Leadership: Letting go**

School principals and senior leadership teams hold essential levers to the recognition and development of OLE. Often principals, senior leaders and middle leaders (panel chairs) are, however, reluctant to let go of their power, reluctant to take risks in a high stakes environment. The paradox is that the more they let go of the reins of power and trust the incipient leadership qualities around them, the greater becomes their own authority.

For many school leaders, this comes naturally and effortlessly. Theirs is an intuitive or well rehearsed understanding of the levers, and potential levers which they hold or distribute. For many continuing leadership development is critical so that they come to see that in every event in relation to learning, curriculum and assessment, OLE can become an essential component.

Over time many of the 'old style', battle weary' principals will be replaced by a new generation of visionary and innovative 'new blood'. In the short and medium term, the late majority are most likely to be brought on board by practical exemplars of successful innovation, by evidence from their peers, by exchanges with other schools, by shadowing or pairing with other principals, by critical friends, coaches or other forms partnership which help them see that there is a Holy Grail and that is worth journeying towards.

## **6. OLE needs advocates and champions**

Innovation and change within the system is reliant on the people carriers - the leading edge fellow travellers, missionaries, true believers, ambassadors, advocates, champions and critical friends. Crucial to the mix is the alliance between school personnel and people from other agencies, people who bring a fresh perspective and understanding of young people's lives, concerns and hopes, one not viewed perpetually through the lens of school subjects, examinations and benchmarks. The synergy of learning 'in captivity' and 'in the wild' is created through the dialogue, or new discourse, between people who come from different institutional assumptions and ways working but through a learning conversation with a common value base and shared goal.

OLE needs champions. For teachers, the closer those champions are to classroom practice, the more credibility they will carry. For principals, it is other principals who are the most credible witnesses. EDB might give through to some form of secondment for principals and teachers to work as critical friends. A critical friend might work with a cluster of four to six schools, not only supporting practice in each individual school but also acting as an honest broker, identifying and disseminating breakthrough practice.

Students too can be champions. As we have seen from the few examples in the schools visited, students can be passionate advocates of OLE. They can contribute to professional development workshops, to conferences, to inter-school visits, talking with their peers in other schools and acting as peer mentors. They need validation and support to continue and develop their influence.

In this respect, the choice of coordinator is crucial. Those chosen, or elected, to this role need to have and to demonstrate commitment, energy, enterprise, team working abilities and a professional authority with their colleagues.

## **7. Building capacity and sustainability**

The sustainability of OLE will always be fragile if it rests with one missionary and lacks a wider shared commitment to OLE within the senior management team or School Improvement Team. In leading edge schools, the commitment to OLE as an integral aspect of children's experience was not only a vital shared belief among the

staff but also spilled over into their relationship and advocacy with other schools, with influential committees and other forums.

Reference was made in school visits to ‘capacity’ and ‘capacity building’. This refers to the amount of capital that is invested within a school, within a system, resilient enough to withstand opposition and therefore sustainable over the longer term. This requires optimism, a vision of the big picture, an ability to foresee and cope with setbacks and a collaborative approach to strategic planning.

This is closely allied with SSE which tells the school’s story. Without PASOLE<sup>1</sup> at the very heart of SSE it risks being marginalized, whereas with a good story to tell, the impact on ESR provides the conduit into the very epicentre of policy making.

It is important to recognise that governments are generally impatient. They want measurable attainment evidence and are highly sensitive to international pressures from sources such as OECD. Hong Kong politicians and policy makers would not relish relinquishing their place as a high performing country on international league tables. For PASOLE to be sustainable, two strategies are a) to go for some quick wins and b) to observe the aphorism ‘don’t water the rocks’ (the ‘laggards’). In other words, long term ambition has to be allied to some short term gains, investing where there are green shoots of growth and not wasting energy on trying to cultivate the barren ground. Strong and resilient partnerships among schools and between schools and external agencies are essential as only exceptional schools are able to go it on their own. ‘Swimming upstream’ as Eliot Eisner puts it, is made much more viable in the company of strong and confident allies.

Quick wins can come in the form of case studies, vignettes, publications, videos, students and teachers talking about their experience, exploiting the power of the internet to give impetus to the epidemic. This may take the form of a relentless campaign to capture breakthrough practices, to build an archive which can feed the media, furnish workshops and conferences and enlist the support of key influential people. This is a form of (small p) political activity, acknowledging that resistance and change are always political in nature.

Showcasing of exemplary practice such as Campus TV and Model Court need to be given a high profile through written case studies, DIY staff development packages, interactive video/DVD, web based and downloadable materials. The many different agencies who work with schools – universities and independent consultants for example – need to be brought inside so that OLE can become integral to their interventions whether in a whole school or subject context. From mainstream teachers’ point of view, it is examples of OLE within the curriculum that will prove most convincing, illustrating how subject teaching can be made more engaging, more active while achieving the same outcomes.

Focused visits by teachers to other schools with a clear sense of purpose, structure and follow up can encourage teachers to widen their horizons through seeing and being involved in innovative forms of practice. Importing ideas back into their own schools

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<sup>1</sup> PASOLE is the Collaborative Research and Development (“Seed”) Projects: Partnership Scheme of Other Learning Experience (PASOLE) on Community Service & Career-related Experiences (08/09 – 09/10) conducted by the Life-wide Learning and Library Section of Education Bureau.

requires a committed leadership and sensitivity to the pace of change. Change may initially involve only one or two teachers but can grow to four and five and then ten or twelve as long as it has the support, encouragement and advocacy of senior leaders who provide the incentive and the climate.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Examples of OLE in some schools visited:**

##### **1. The Model Trial**

The Model (or mock) trial is an ambitious project which includes a number of skills and addresses a range of social, legal and moral issues. It creates a scenario as close as one can get to a real trial in that it takes place in a real courtroom with a judge, solicitor and lawyer and an example of a real case. The students are presented with the case and have time to plan, to examine the facts and discriminate fact from conjecture and differing eye witness accounts. They interview witnesses with attention to court procedures, rules of evidence, and ethical and legal guidelines. Considerable preparation is involved over the period of a month as there is a significant body of skills to be acquired and practised. The trial is itself a model of how a significant body of content may be allied to a significant body of personal, social and vocational skills. Such is the intensity of focus of the activity, the emotional investment and the dynamic setting that its impact is likely to remain with students long after much of their more passive learning is long forgotten.

##### **2. TV Campus**

Every Thursday morning, there is a TV broadcast in the school. It is the outcome of concentrated teamwork by a group of young people in the previous week. It may include news reports, commentaries and discussion and interviews with celebrities or other commentators on issues of importance. For the young people involved, it is described as the most engaging and satisfying aspect of their school lives. It encompasses a wide range of technical, social and academic skills from researching, analysing, synthesising and presenting to target setting, organising, managing and teamwork. It is exemplary of OLE because:

- There is a concrete end product.
- It demands a sense of audience.
- It is student-centred.
- It is highly creative.
- It demands systematic discipline and time management.
- It requires effective team work.
- It involves a sharing of leadership.
- It requires the integration of a wide range of generic skills.
- It feeds into various aspects of the curriculum.

##### **3. The Farm**

Students visit a farm, interview the farmer about aspects of his work, the economics and agriculture and ecology of farming, farming as a career and a way of life. They spend some time experiencing an aspect of farming such as strawberry picking. There is no substitute for the direct experience of visiting and working on a farm, says the

teacher. ‘You can’t truly know the work of a farmer inside the classroom’. You can be told, you can read about it, you can view videos, you can role play and engage in simulation, each form of activity bringing you closer to an understanding of what it means to be a farmer but the most authentic experience is to be there, to feel what it is like to work hard and long hours under a hot sun.

#### **4. V-Net**

In a school, volunteer service is seen as serving twin ends – one, to be of service to the very young and the elderly, two, to provide experiences for young people which build their self confidence and self esteem. In addition to community service engaged in by all students, in the school service is also an alternative for young people struggling with academic work and as a consequence acting out their frustrations in aggressive or anti-social behaviour. The social worker who manages this activity introduced two students. One of whom was described as having been ‘evil’, disruptive and uncontrollable in his first year in the school but is now a changed person as a result of seeing that he had something tangible to offer to others. The other, a previously shy retiring girl, is now described as a tough minded leader of her peers.

## Appendix 2

### Students' perception of OLE demonstrated in some interviews:

- Visits: to tertiary institutions, museums, farms
- Games and sports: a wide range of extra-curricular activities
- Musical performances: choirs, orchestras, ensembles
- Career-related experiences: career days, exhibitions, visiting speakers
- Cultural activities: exchange programmes
- Competitions: inter-school, national, international competitions and awards
- Conferences: focused days on chosen themes and careers
- Exhibitions: Art, products of student's work
- Charity fund raising, flag day
- Career talks, job site visits, job shadowing
- Adventure leadership training camp.
- Rotary mentorship programme
- Blind day (working with the visually impaired)
- Interviewing and writing biography of elderly people
- Leadership training in collaboration with the YWCA
- Mock interviewing
- Talks by former students in a variety of careers
- Planning and organising camping trips.
- Partnership with the Town Hall in visits to mainland China.
- Organising events e.g. a Fair, a competition
- Leading a team, and taking responsibility on behalf of your peers.
- Exchange programmes with Singapore, Malaysia, Borneo, Taiwan, Japan
- Hosting students from other countries
- Singing and storytelling contests
- Choral speaking, solo verse speaking
- Drama - communication and life skills
- Read-a-thons
- Simulated American elections
- Drama and Language arts festivals
- Visiting the SPCA, visiting animal shelters and pet shops - abuses of animals
- Mother's Choice (sex education and drug education run by external experts)
- Making a film, producing, acting or scriptwriting
- Making a difference to the environment e.g. painting a wall
- Working with disadvantaged or marginalised groups



## **Appendix 3**

### **Leadership of OLE in three schools visited:**

#### **School A: Teacher Leadership**

This school exemplifies leadership exercised from the bottom up by a few committed staff who have embraced OLE, demonstrating its power in their own subjects but also grasping every opportunity to spread it out school wide. In this case, a recently appointed principal is apparently happy for a few enthusiasts among the staff to take the initiative to lead their colleagues. One member of staff in particular with a passionate commitment to OLE champions its development and is creatively dissatisfied with current practice, evaluating, rethinking and reframing approaches. However, from a sustainability point of view it can be precarious if programmes rest on the enthusiasm and creativity of one or two individuals. It is therefore important for teacher leadership to be distributed as widely as possible. The school has an OLE committee of 5 teachers (last year 8) with a commitment to supporting and advising their colleagues as well as running the programme. Its survival is also likely to be enhanced when activities are not just arranged by teachers but also by students. So student leadership is encouraged and activities are designed by staff to give students as much latitude and decision-making as possible.

What remains an open question is the degree to which a new principal will adopt a priority which was the personal vision of a previous incumbent. The danger lies in the most recent ESR report which pointed to negative value-added and the lack of 'stars'. This could tempt a leader to focus more strategically and tactically on raising examination scores and giving less priority to OLE. From the staff's point of view, the ESR team fails to see the value added in personal and social terms and the strong team spirit among students which is less accessible of measurement. They also point to rising standards over the years and are sceptical of how the value-added equation is arrived at. There is a case for this to be much more explicit to staff if they wish to challenge it.

#### **School B: Strong visionary leadership**

This school exemplifies charismatic leadership exercised by a principal who knows what she wants from her staff and her students. In her own words, her approach is 'structural leadership', expressed in systems, rules, agreed procedures, rewards and sanctions. Sanctions are kept to a minimum and behaviour is kept in place by incentive and reward and by caring. The ethos is one of very friendly relationships, the principal herself being conspicuously at ease with senior girls, even describing them as 'friends'. Authority is implicit rather than explicit, both optimistic and maternalistic. Expectations are set high. From the ESR viewpoint, this was described as 'overcaring', which may be interpreted as leaving not enough space, or 'wobble room' for individualism or dissent. This may be attributable to the leadership style being strongly conviction-led, asserting a set of values and a Christian ethos. The statistic that from 40% of students being 'believers' to 90% was, in her view, due to the ethos of the school and the modelling of behaviour by staff and fellow students. The outcomes are extremely impressive. On the day only two out of 1,160 students were late and examination results are well above average for the type and location of

the school, having moved progressively up the bands. She wants her school to be a 'prestigious' school and the ten minute video made in 2005 is presented as a showcase for the achievements and awards gained by the school. It is very much a promotional video.

What is very apparent from staff responses is that they have internalised the ethic of the school and speak with one voice. This is also true of the selected students, hugely personable, articulate, and self confident, obvious ambassadors for the school. The contrast with school A could not be more acute. On the basis of a brief visit, it leaves open to question the degree to which strong teacher leadership would thrive or indeed assertive student leadership. The word used in relation to the Student Council, for example, was to 'execute' decisions, and although they could put up proposals to the senior team the scope for independent decision making was not immediately obvious. There is a strong emphasis on student leadership. Every student chooses a role to fulfil such as classroom monitor or homework 'Minister', for example. This is described as servant leadership, in that it provides a service to one's classmates and to the school but the scope for leadership as opposed to a duty is not altogether clear.

### **School C: Distributed leadership**

In this school, two major OLE initiatives provide indications of a style of leadership exercised by teachers, by the school social worker, by students and others who all play a role in taking forward the various initiatives in the school. Programmes are devised by teachers in collaboration with social workers and educational psychologists and others are invited to work with them towards common goals. There is Life Planning Committee which takes the leadership on career issues but, it is claimed, that this is not solely about careers but life planning in a broader sense. Students are involved in providing feedback and exercise their own initiative in taking school programmes forward. TV Campus offers genuine leadership opportunities for students to make decisions, to work in teams, to share leadership with the freedom to make mistakes with the support in the background from members of staff. A number of teachers who 'lead' in Campus TV do so from behind, in a supporting, rather than a directing role. Without an opportunity to see the principal, it is difficult to make judgements as to leadership from the top but staff describe his leadership as essentially supportive and facilitative, 'spreading out' leadership and creating what has been described as a 'leaderful' community or, in Sergiovanni's terminology 'density' of leadership. Asked what proportion of staff share this level of commitment to OLE, one teacher says 'about half'. With a critical mass behind change, from the middle out as well as bottom up there is, it would appear, a greater possibility of sustainability over time.