Challenge 5 : Improving the quality of English Language education through curriculum leadership development

Overview

Despite the key role played by curriculum leaders in the development of the whole school, more and more teachers are hesitant about taking up a leadership role in schools. In recent years, an increasing number of panel heads have been stepping down from their positions. What could have contributed to this? Did they lack the essential knowledge and skills? Were they overwhelmed by excessive workload? Has the educational context become so fast changing and complex that they found it hard to cope with? The worsening of this situation does not only pose problems to individual school heads, but will also undermine the quality of English Language education in the school sector.

The nurturing of a critical mass of curriculum leaders in the field of English Language education has therefore become our key concern. Having promoted curriculum leadership development through our school-based support services over the past few years, we have gained a deeper understanding of the problems faced by the panel heads/leaders and their deep-seated needs. We have also become more aware of the importance of well-planned and systematic training, and the use of different support strategies to speed up the development of a greater number of quality leaders.

In recent years, English panel heads and teachers have been busy coping with new policies and initiatives like the implementation of the New Senior Secondary curriculum, the use of the English Enhancement Grant and the Refined English Enhancement Grant, in addition to the existing ones like Small Class Teaching, Territory-wide System Assessment, etc. To add to this list, panel heads/coordinators have to manage such regular tasks as conducting meetings, lesson observation and book inspection, writing subject plans, developing the school-based curriculum, and so on. The challenge is not just a matter of workload, but whether they can fully appreciate the essence and the rationale of the policies/initiatives; whether they possess enough knowledge and skills to cope with them; how they can set priority goals and make coherence among those initiatives and tasks; whether they can develop and mobilise the whole team to work towards those goals; and most important of all how they can professionalise the administrative tasks and turn them into opportunities for professional development for the whole team.

To address the said challenges, we have attempted to identify some important focusses in different aspects of curriculum leadership development. Though the list below is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, it provides a good reference for developing our (potential) leaders more systematically.

Development focus	Detail
Changing perception	• Writing annual plans, proposals, conducting lesson observation and book inspection are professional rather than administrative tasks • Taking ownership of decision making
Developing positive values & attitudes	• Being a role model for panel members • Enhancing confidence in leading the subject panel • Sharing commitment and determination

Enhancing knowledge	• Improving understanding of the initiative, the deep changes required and the implications for work • Keeping abreast of the latest developments in society, education policy, curriculum & assessment issues
Developing management skills (curriculum, people, resources, tasks)	• Improving communication and coordination with school stakeholders and outside parties • Developing and deploying human resources • Using data effectively to identify the developmental needs of the panel members and students • Documenting experiences and resources • Setting priorities • Aligning tasks to achieve coherence between different initiatives • Developing a school-based holistic curriculum • Conducting meetings effectively • Resolving conflicts • Working in alignment with the school's goals • Conducting evaluation for improvement and accountability purposes

Apart from infusing the above focusses into our day to day support for individual schools, we have made strategic use of three initiatives to help different groups of English teachers to develop those aspects of leadership. The special features of the initiatives are summarised below.

	Hong Kong English Teachers Exchange Activities to the Mainland[1]	**Curriculum Leadership Network**	**English Enhancement Scheme[2]**
Target group	10 primary and secondary English teachers and principals	Panel heads and coordinators/PSMCDs from 9 primary schools	Panel heads and coordinators from 4 secondary schools
Objective of support	To help participants become mentors and change agents in their own school	To facilitate the development of a learning community within and among schools	To develop participants' capability to plan for the holistic and long term development of the English subject

[1] This Programme was piloted in 2009/10. Outstanding English teachers in Hong Kong were invited to join the project. Each was stationed in a school in Guangdong for one to two weeks to collaborate with the English teachers there. The major activities included leading co-planning meetings, demonstrating lessons, observing lessons and giving feedback, conducting workshops and sharing sessions, etc.

[2] The English Enhancement Grant was open to application by all secondary schools in 2006/07. Schools were granted a maximum of $3 million for a period of six years to implement measures that would enhance the learning and teaching of English in their school. To apply for the funding, schools were required to write a 6-year proposal providing an analysis of their needs, the measures to adopt, the monitoring and evaluation methods, a timeline, a budget breakdown, etc. Most English teachers were quite reluctant to take up this task partly because they did not have experience in writing this kind of proposal and more likely they regarded this as a non-teaching duty.

Development focus	Understand the national context in order to conduct professional exchange with English teachers in Guangdong	Develop participants' understanding of quality learning and teaching practices and enhance their capability to promote those practices in schools	Strengthen participants' role in planning, collaborating with and monitoring the service providers hired through the English Enhancement Grant
Development strategy	Adoption of a train-the-trainer mode: participants were required to - lead co-planning meetings with mainland teachers - demonstrate lessons - observe lessons and give feedback - deliver workshops and sharing sessions	Adoption of a network mode in order to provide members with - systematic training on handling routine management tasks professionally (e.g. effective use of lesson observation and book inspection to improve learning and teaching) - school-based support to help them apply learning in context - inter-school professional development activities to promote peer learning	Helping teachers to turn non-teaching duties like proposal writing and negotiating with service providers into meaningful pursuits which enable them to - diagnose and reflect on the current state of play of the English subject in their schools - find out the immediate and long term needs of the students and the teacher team - plan holistically how different resources can be utilised to cater to those needs - develop collaboration and communication skills with different parties

In the three articles you are going to read, we will share with you how we have made strategic use of those initiatives to develop teachers' curriculum leadership and the initial impact on their growth in different aspects like the capability to plan, interpersonal skills and pedagogical knowledge. With concerted and persistent efforts, the strengthening of the middle managers in terms of quantity and quality will quicken the pace of school development and the overall improvement of English Language education in Hong Kong.

Nurturing English Language curriculum leaders through Hong Kong Teachers' Exchange Activities to the Mainland

Background

There are many excellent and committed English teachers who plan and deliver the English Language curriculum very effectively in Hong Kong. They help students make significant progress in different aspects of English learning. Yet how can we nurture them to become curriculum leaders to create a stronger impact on others? It has always been an ambition of educational practitioners to develop more curriculum leaders to ever–improve the quality of language education in Hong Kong. Apart from various curriculum leadership training sessions currently offered to teachers, are there other means through which the professional capacity of a critical mass of potential leaders can be enhanced?

A Pilot Scheme on Hong Kong Teachers' Exchange Activities to the Mainland was launched in May 2010. Ten Hong Kong English teachers (exchange teachers) took part in it. They were stationed at nine schools (collaborating schools) in Foshan and Shenzhen in the Guangdong Province for one to two weeks. They shared their experiences with teachers (collaborating teachers) in Foshan and Shenzhen through co-planning/ teaching lessons, lesson demonstration, lesson observation and analysis, school-based workshops and territory-wide seminars. The aim of the Pilot Scheme was to help exchange teachers gain a better understanding of the national context and the needs of the collaborating schools, strengthen their knowledge about the English Language curricula of both places and pedagogical skills, and develop leadership skills such as chairing meetings, collaborating with others, handling conflicts, planning the school-based curriculum and sharing school-based experiences.

Levels involved at collaborating schools

P3-5 (collaborating primary schools in Foshan)
S1-2 (collaborating secondary schools in Foshan)
P1-2, P4 & P6 (collaborating primary schools in Shenzhen)

Rationale

- Based on different learning theories, the most effective method of learning is through teaching others and hands-on experience. According to research, a learner can successfully retain 90% of the knowledge learned through teaching others and 75% through hands-on experience.
- The Scheme was premised on the notion of training the trainers. Through the Scheme, exchange teachers were given different opportunities to learn and apply leadership skills for professional growth.
- The Scheme has built in lots of chances for exchange teachers to learn from their counterparts in Hong Kong and in the Mainland for forming a learning community.

Strategies

1. Two-phase structured training for exchange teachers

Exchange teachers went through two phases of structured training to acquire essential professional knowledge and skills to become effective curriculum leaders so that they could make positive contributions to the collaborating schools. They attended a four-day site-based training session in the Guangdong

Province in March 2010 with visits paid to the Education Department, Research Institutes in Guangzhou and collaborating schools in Foshan and Shenzhen to learn about the national and school contexts. They also attended a three-day structured seminar cum workshop in Hong Kong in April and developed knowledge and skills in conducting curriculum planning, lesson observation, meetings and sharing sessions.

Phase one
On-site training in Foshan and Shenzhen

Phase two
Training for exchange teachers

2. Using learning logs to help exchange teachers and collaborating teachers reflect on their experience

Both exchange teachers and collaborating teachers in Foshan and Shenzhen wrote learning logs daily to reflect on their professional growth and learning. Exchange teachers reflected on the effectiveness of their work, difficulties encountered and areas for improvement whereas collaborating teachers reflected on the knowledge gained, difficulties encountered and ways to apply the teaching ideas. Through reflecting on the change process, both parties were able to assess the impact of the experience on their professional practice.

3. Forming learning communities to foster professional growth in different aspects among exchange and collaborating teachers

All teachers were encouraged to share with each other and form a learning community during the exchange period. They conducted lesson analysis and gave feedback to each other frankly. Different tasks such as co-planning/teaching lessons, demonstrating lessons, conducting lesson observation and post-observation discussion and presenting theme-based talks were used to provide opportunities for both parties to enrich each other's knowledge. Exchange teachers learned how to take the lead to elucidate English teaching concepts (such as task-based learning, vocabulary building, teaching grammar in context) and share new ideas. Collaborating teachers co-planned lessons with exchange teachers so that they could apply new teaching strategies and ideas in their own classrooms. Exchange and collaborating teachers also conceptualised and shared school-based experiences on different occasions. They collected evidence of student learning to help themselves reflect on the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Their sharing of experiences in school-based workshops and territory-wide seminars has also fostered the professional growth of teachers in Hong Kong and the Guangdong Province.

What happened

Time	Task done by exchange teacher	Purpose
3 March 2010	Attended a briefing session for exchange teachers	• Prepare exchange teachers for the mission and help them understand their role • Conduct needs analysis with collaborating schools in Foshan and Shenzhen
16 to 19 March 2010 Foshan 16 to 18 March 2010 Shenzhen	Visited educational institutes in Guangzhou and collaborating schools in Foshan and Shenzhen	• Provide structured learning programme (phase one) to help exchange teachers learn the latest developments in the national curriculum and school contexts • Work out the development focusses (e.g. reading and writing) and mode of collaboration with the schools
12, 16 and 23 April 2010	Attended a three-day seminar cum workshop	• Provide structured learning programme (phase two) to develop exchange teachers' planning and curriculum leadership skills
Early to mid-May (one-week station-in mode in Shenzhen & two-week station-in mode in Foshan) Students in Foshan learn to use mind maps taught by an exchange teacher.	Stationed at collaborating schools in Foshan & Shenzhen to work with a team of teachers Lesson demonstration by an exchange teacher	• Understand English Language education in the Mainland through lesson observation and discussion • Collaborate and share with collaborating teachers through co - planning/teaching of lessons, lesson demonstration and observation • Share knowledge and skills with collaborating teachers through school-based workshops and theme-based talks • Reflect on student learning and teacher development in the process Exchange teachers and primary students of a collaborating school in Shenzhen

14 May 2010 28 May 2010 Sharing by an exchange teacher & collaborating teachers	Reflected on the school-based experiences gained in a territory-wide seminar in Foshan	• Share school-based experiences in promoting curriculum development, student learning and collaborative culture in the Pilot Scheme • Share the positive changes and impact made on teachers and students
30 June 2010 Sharing by exchange teachers	Reflected on how to nurture English Language curriculum leaders and shared experiences in a territory-wide seminar in Hong Kong	• Share how curriculum leadership development can be achieved through taking part in this Pilot Scheme • Identify the changes and learning brought by the Pilot Scheme to exchange teachers in various aspects such as knowledge in curriculum planning, teaching pedagogy, interpersonal and management skills and teacher development strategies • Share how the experiences gained by exchange teachers can enhance their capacity as panel heads or coordinators in managing or developing other English panel members

Impact

1. Development of exchange teachers' curriculum leadership skills

Through such exchange activities to the Mainland, exchange teachers have developed different curriculum leadership skills including knowledge about the latest developments in education policies, curriculum and assessment issues in the Mainland, positive values and attitudes as curriculum leaders and the ability to positively influence other teachers. Below are some examples of reflections related to curriculum leadership quoted from the learning logs of the exchange teachers and other sources:

Exchange teachers' reflections	Curriculum leadership elements
"I have learned more about the assessment system in China." "I have learned more about the National Curriculum." "I have learned about the training and development of language teachers (in Guangdong)."	**Enhancing knowledge** • Exchange teachers have shown a better understanding of the language initiatives and changes taking place in the Mainland.
"We have introduced changes when working with our [collaborating] schools - student-centred curriculum, integrative use of language, task-based learning and holistic lesson planning." "[Exchange] teachers know how to scaffold students to write in the writing process." "We have enabled Foshan teachers to understand the importance of collecting learning evidence to improve learning & teaching."	**Changing perception** • Exchange teachers have tried to bring a lot of innovative ideas to collaborating teachers to change their perception of English Language learning and teaching.
"Our enthusiasm has motivated Foshan teachers to try out new things." "We care about building friendship and a network with Foshan teachers for their continuous professional development." "We have developed learning communities." "I have much passion for working with teachers and children in Mainland China." "We want to bring changes to the teaching of English in China."	**Developing positive values and attitudes** • After the Pilot Scheme, exchange teachers have become even more committed to bringing positive changes to English Language education in the Mainland. They have also successfully influenced collaborating teachers and developed learning communities among them.

"We have nurtured curriculum leaders [at collaborating schools]."

"There was mutual learning when we jointly designed the curriculum, lessons and resources."

"We share our perspective and experience in leadership with collaborating teachers."

Developing leadership and management skills

- Exchange teachers have developed management skills by setting clear directions for collaborating teachers in co-planning lessons, communicating with different stakeholders at collaborating schools, setting priorities for different tasks and promoting teacher development through sharing on different occasions.

2. Development of collaborating teachers' professional knowledge and skills

Through exchange activities, collaborating teachers have shown changes in the following aspects as shown by their written reflections:

Collaborating teachers' reflections

"I have learned how to develop students' creativity and higher order thinking skills including the use of multiple perspectives, reasoning, anticipation and problem-solving skills."

"I have learned how to use frameworks to find out text structures."

"After talking about the teaching plan with Christo, I have a better understanding of phonics teaching. I've learned how to teach phonics."

"I have learned how to analyse students' work."

"I've learned to teach vocabulary in context."

Learning of collaborating teachers

Changes in pedagogical knowledge & skills

- Collaborating teachers have learned new learning and teaching strategies and professional knowledge about English Language education in Hong Kong.

"I used to speak Cantonese in class. Quit it!"

"We often treat our students as robots and ask them to read, write, listen and speak. But they are not interested in them at all. So we should arouse their interest and develop their confidence in using English"

"I think I will co-teach with my school colleagues when necessary."

"I think classroom observation and self-reflection promote a better understanding of effective teaching."

"The games are so wonderful and I use them for teaching phonics."

Changes in perception

- Through co-teaching with exchange teachers, lesson demonstration and observation, collaborating teachers have changed their views on learning and teaching. They have shown willingness to try out new teaching ideas and apply them in their classrooms.

Facilitating factors

1. Commitment and determination of exchange teachers

Exchange teachers were very committed to accomplishing their mission of making a positive contribution to English Language education in China. They showed great determination to help teachers and students at collaborating schools to benefit from the exchange activities. Their willingness to share teaching ideas with collaborating teachers, develop curriculum plans and resources for students and devote a lot of extra time to the Pilot Scheme enabled it to succeed. Because of the exchange teachers' painstaking efforts, a very positive response was received from collaborating schools in Foshan and Shenzhen.

2. Open culture of collaborating schools

Collaborating teachers were very receptive to new ideas when working with exchange teachers. They actively participated in different tasks including lesson observation and analysis, co-planning/teaching of lessons and sharing school-based experiences in territory-wide seminars with exchange teachers. They were very willing to learn and share their own ideas. With such an open culture at collaborating schools, exchange teachers were able to make different contributions to collaborating schools and conduct co-teaching and lesson demonstration smoothly.

Conclusions and suggestions

Teachers and students at collaborating schools in Foshan and Shenzhen have benefited a lot from such professional exchanges of ideas. The exchange activities to the Mainland have provided valuable opportunities for training exchange teachers to become effective trainers. Contextual and on-site learning in the Pilot Scheme has greatly helped exchange teachers develop curriculum leadership skills. Exchange teachers' horizons have been broadened as they have developed a better understanding of English Language education in the Mainland. The Pilot Scheme can be one of the ways to train up Hong Kong teachers to become competent curriculum leaders. Exchange teachers may become the agents for forming cross-border learning communities with collaborating schools in the Mainland. Such learning communities can be expanded to other provinces when enough experiences have been accumulated and conceptualised in the future.

Special thanks should be given to the school heads of participating schools for their full support to the Scheme and all the exchange teachers for their commitment and enthusiasm in making this Scheme a success. With this Scheme, a platform has been built for nurturing curriculum leaders in Hong Kong.

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Ms Alice LEE Ching-ying, Yuen Long Public Secondary School
Ms Fiona LAU Sui-ha, CCC Tam Lee Lai Fun Memorial Secondary School

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Ms Grace TSE Lai-wah, Hong Kong and Macau Lutheran Church Primary School
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Building a Curriculum Leadership Network among primary schools

Background

The growing complexity of the educational environment requires a group of committed and professional leaders who can inspire teachers and help them maximise their potential to improve student learning. Although some teachers show inborn leadership skills, most can benefit from focussed training and mentoring. This is precisely the aim of the Curriculum Leadership Network (CLN) – a programme we have been piloting to nurture a critical mass of leaders by providing them with systematic curriculum leadership training and a platform for peer learning and mutual support.

Over the years, our Section has been collaborating with many primary schools and we are pleased to have contributed to the improvement of teachers' professional knowledge and classroom teaching. It is, therefore, very encouraging to have been able to identify amongst the schools we support a group of teachers who are committed to making a difference and honing their leadership skills.

This article explains how we have stepped up our support service in order to pool together the talents of curriculum leaders from nine primary schools and help them develop the skills required to be effective change agents as they are expected to lead, plan and manage the school-based curriculum and its implementation at school.

Target groups

PSM(CD)s, English panel heads, coordinators and potential leaders of nine primary schools

Rationale

The design of the CLN was premised on the concept of **professional community**. Bryk, Camburn & Louis (1999) used the term to refer to schools in which interaction about professional issues among teachers is frequent and teachers' actions are governed by shared norms focussed on the practice and improvement of teaching and learning. Through the CLN, we aim to promote the development of professional communities within and across schools in order to (a) provide teachers with a context for deep talks about teaching and learning, (b) encourage them to take collective responsibility for student learning, and (c) help teachers connect their continuing professional development with improved student outcomes.

Strategies

How can the concept of professional community be put into practice?

1. Adoption of a "task-based" approach: Panel heads/coordinators are often required to perform a range of administrative tasks which include preparing subject plans, conducting lesson observation and book inspection, recruiting teaching and support staff, monitoring and evaluating the work of the panel members, etc. In carrying out those tasks, they may face similar problems or share common concerns. Exploring the issues relating to these tasks together would create opportunities for peer learning and mutual support.

2. Focussing on the professional nature of the tasks: Panel heads/coordinators are expected to play the dual roles of administrator and professional leader. To change the mindset and the practices of the members of the CLN, we put emphasis on how those administrative tasks can be professionalised. For instance, in the process of writing a subject plan, all panel members can be involved to identify students' learning needs and work out the improvement measures. By doing so, the whole panel will assume a collective responsibility for student learning.

3. Promoting the use of evidence in members' interactions about teaching and learning: Emphasis has been put on using student learning data gathered from lessons, student work and assessment to help members identify students' needs, to find out their progress and to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching. In conducting post-lesson observation discussions, for instance, the use of data in members' discourse will not only increase the depth of talk about learning and teaching, but also help members make targeted improvements.

How the CLN works

To develop the leadership capabilities of our members, a three-pronged training mode has been adopted which consists of:

a. Structured learning: Systematic training has been designed to support members to perform the tasks of a panel head/curriculum leader effectively. The arrangement takes into account the work cycle of schools, e.g., training conducted in July focussed on subject planning. The whole programme lasts about two years with different focusses for each training event as shown below.

Examples of training focus

- Planning for the subject
- Monitoring and evaluating the work of the panel
- Conducting effective meetings
- Conducting lesson observation
- Recruiting, deploying and developing staff
- Conducting book inspection

b. School-based support: Officers will help members apply the content of the structured training in their school contexts. The process includes identifying development focusses, working out action plans, implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of the planned measures, and coaching them in leadership and management skills.

c. Inter-school activities: Visits are arranged to enable members to observe how meetings, lesson observation discussions, and professional development activities are conducted in different schools. Teachers give each other peer feedback to help each other improve. Meetings are also arranged for them to share issues of concern and celebrate successes.

What happened

Training and support for the CLN members started in July last year. Two training events have since been held. Details are captured below.

Event/Task	Key message
A two-day workshop was held in early July 2010 to look into: 1. Why is curriculum leadership development so important? 2. What is the CLN? 3. How to plan for the development of the subject? 4. How to conduct effective meetings? 	- Moral leadership is the key to curriculum leadership development. - Subject plan writing is not an administrative task. It provides a good opportunity for conducting holistic planning of the curriculum. - The planning process involves the use of data to help identify the development focusses; and monitoring and evaluation have to be built in at the planning stage. - Communication and consensus with all relevant parties involved at the planning and implementation stages will bring about positive results. - Supportive conditions are created for the realisation of the subject plan through cultivation of a sense of ownership and strategic resource deployment. - Co-planning meetings are used to foster professional dialogues among members. - The effectiveness of meetings hinges on clear purposes, good preparation and follow-up. - Active participation is engaged by all through proper steering of the meeting.
School-based support was provided to help participants prepare the subject plan/action plan (July – September) for the 2010/11 school year.	

A one-day workshop was held in December 2010 on conducting lesson observations (LO).

1. How to use LO as a professional development tool?

2. How to identify the roots of problems when lesson observation is used as an appraisal tool?

- LO serves the purposes of teacher appraisal, school accountability and teacher development.

- Both quantitative and qualitative data can be collected to improve instruction in further planning; identify professional development needs for the teacher and the whole panel; and motivate colleagues.

- Preparation before LO and after LO is essential.

- An agreed protocol enables members to conduct the lesson observation and post-observation discussion efficiently and effectively.

- Effective feedback in the post-observation conference nurtures a sense of worth and positive self-esteem, supports the teacher in looking at positive and not-so-positive aspects of practice, focusses on a few key areas, deals with concrete and observed examples, and promotes goal setting and the development of strategies.

- A successful lesson observation is a lesson
  a) where the teacher can demonstrate how he/she puts into practice the range of strategies at his/her disposal to promote effective learning and
  b) that provides an opportunity for colleagues to learn from each other and improve their professional understanding of what they do and why they do what they do.

- To avoid the negative effects of using LO as an appraisal tool, panel heads can play an important role in
  a) creating a supportive culture of risk-taking and experimentation;
  b) setting clear expectations and communicating them effectively to members;
  c) keeping themselves abreast of the latest developments in teaching and learning;
  d) seizing the opportunity to recognise teachers' strengths and support them to make improvements through constructive feedback; and
  e) acting as a bridge between the school management and the teachers.

Four inter-school lesson observation activities were conducted between January and March.

- Host schools were responsible for sending an invitation to other members, preparing the teaching plan and the LO tool, demonstrating teaching, and conducting the pre-teaching briefing (optional) and the post-lesson conference.

- Members gave feedback and completed the LO reflection log.

Officers supported members to conduct peer LO in their own schools and provided feedback on their use of LO as a professional development tool throughout the year.

Progress

1. Improvement in different aspects of curriculum leadership development

Having worked closely with our members for just nine months, it is encouraging to find that they have made considerable improvement in different aspects of curriculum leadership development (CLD). So far members have been asked to prepare a subject/action plan and conduct an inter-school lesson observation activity. To enable us to understand their growth, we collected subject plans/action plans, reflection logs, teaching plans and LO tools from members and collated the e-mail exchanges, our observations and members' feedback for analysis. The key findings are summarised below.

Task One: Preparing subject/action plans

<table>
<tr><th>Aspect of CLD</th><th>Finding</th></tr>
<tr><td>Planning</td><td>
Strengths

All members were able to give more thought to the use of different types of resources (e.g. manpower, funding, service providers) and anticipate problems (e.g. sustainability of the impact of the teaching practices, professional development opportunities of teachers) and build in supportive conditions (e.g. panel heads create dialogue with the management to resolve the issues raised by teachers).
Measures proposed were concrete (e.g. introducing bonus marks in dictation to encourage students to revise high frequency words) and timelines were set clearly.

An extract from a subject plan
<table>
<tr><th>Objectives</th><th>Strategies / Actions</th><th>Time scale</th><th>Success Criteria</th><th>Evaluation Methods</th><th>Responsibility</th><th>Resources</th></tr>
<tr><td>Enhance students' writing skills</td><td>Infuse elements of picture description and story-ending in P.2-6</td><td>Whole Year</td><td>- There will be at least 2 assignments with picture description or story-ending elements infused in P.2 each term.
- There will be at least 3 assignments with picture description or story-ending elements infused in P.3-6 each term.</td><td>- Teaching and learning materials
- Students' work</td><td>All English teachers</td><td>TSA Materials</td></tr>
</table>
- Specific measures included
- Concrete evaluation criteria set
- Clear time-line set
- Use of different types of resources considered

Members were able to make use of needs analysis tools (e.g. SWOT) to identify the subject development focusses.

</td></tr>
</table>

An excerpt from the reflection log of a teacher after writing up the subject plan

The major differences between this year's plan and previous years' are:

1. I used SWOT to find out the subject focusses of this year.
2. For each focus, clear objectives have been set on improving the curriculum as well as improving students' learning. In this way, apart from developing the curriculum, students' performance has been taken into consideration…

The possible reasons are:

1. Although we had learned about SWOT before, we found it hard to apply our learning in the real context. There are so many problems and we just have no idea where to start.
2. We have the support from the EDB officer and had a number of meetings to identify the development focusses and students' need. In those meetings, we
   - brainstormed what we have been doing;
   - differentiated objectives from resources;
   - worked out which focusses to promote, to sustain, to improve, to consider and to categorise as routine tasks…

Areas for improvement

- Setting observable and focussed outcomes for evaluation are areas for improvement as some of the expectations were either too vague (e.g. noticeable improvement found in students' writing) or focussed on quantity only (e.g. 90% of the students passed the test).

Interpersonal

Strengths

- All members were found to be good listeners and were able to respond appropriately to their colleagues' views/concerns.
- They did timely follow up after meetings.

Area for improvement

- They need to learn how to convince colleagues to work towards common goals.

An excerpt from the reflection log of a teacher after writing up the subject plan

Areas I could improve on:

1. Should have involved all the English teachers in identifying the major focusses at the end of the term last year and agreed on the objectives and the work schedule.
2. Should have built in more professional development opportunities for the teachers involved before implementing the focusses…

Organisational

Areas for improvement

- Preparing budget with clear breakdown to reflect effective use of funding (most of the expenses needed were expressed in a lump sum).
- Developing appropriate selection criteria to identify the right people for the jobs (e.g. the qualities and skills needed for particular tasks were not clearly spelled out).

Task Two: Conducting inter-school lesson observation activities

Aspect of CLD	Finding
Planning	- All were able to plan the task ahead and provided members with the necessary information to facilitate their preparation and contribution (e.g. email messages were sent to all members before the LO activities which provided background information about their school and their students, set out the objectives of the observation, provided the tools for observation and discussion, etc.). **An email sent by the host teacher to other members informing them of the detailed arrangements of the LO activity** Dear CLN members, Thanks for joining the coming inter-school LO next Tuesday. Here I'm sending the information about the LO activity. Hope you can know more about the lesson and the event before we meet next Tuesday. Please kindly note that the starting time of the pre-LO conference is 10:45am. However, we hope that we can meet a bit earlier, i.e. at 10:35am, so that we can have more time to talk about the lesson design before the LO. We know that we may cause some difficulties to you because of your duty at school. We just want to see if there would be any chance that we can start at 10:35am. Would you please reply to us through email and we will confirm the starting time as soon as possible? Thank you. We are looking forward to meeting you! Elsa Pls note that our school is located near Tsing Yi Estate. It's of a walkable distance from Tsing Yi Railway Station. You can refer to the location map attached. - They were able to set observable and measureable outcomes for the lessons observed (e.g. the lesson observation tool below spelled out clearly the objectives of different parts of the lesson, the focus of observation in each part and the evidence to be included in jotting the observation notes).
Pedagogical	- Improvements shown in knowledge of and skills to teach the focus areas using the "new" teaching strategies were suggested in co-planning meetings/raised by peer observers. - Members were able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons observed. - They were able to make use of findings from lesson observations to promote teacher development (instead of making simple conclusions about students' performance, members were able to look into the learning and teaching process, e.g. the instructions given and the classroom interactions, and back up their comments by quoting incidents/ evidence from the lesson). - All the lessons demonstrated were highly effective.
Organisational	- They coordinated well with different parties within the school (e.g. their support staff) to make arrangements for the visits to ensure the smooth running of the LO events. - In some cases, they invited other members of their English Department to take part in the LO event so that their teachers could also benefit from the experience.

Interpersonal	- Friendship among CLN members was established. - They could articulate thoughts and ideas very clearly during the pre-LO briefing and the post-LO conference. - In the post-LO discussion, the participants gave feedback in a polite and positive manner while the teachers observed, listened attentively and responded appropriately.
Personal	- The teachers observed were reflective and receptive to the feedback given, which enabled them to improve their teaching.

A lesson observation tool developed by a teacher to help members conduct focussed observation and discussion

Time	Step	Material	Suggested observation focus (To what extent has/have the…)	Notes (suggestions, comments, queries)
	Pre-writing:		T: teacher / Ps: pupils	
10′	1. Pupils work in groups of four and are given a number of sentence strips. Arrange the strips in three paragraphs and paste them on the A3 paper provided to form a weather report.	sentence strips A3 size paper	T engaged every student. Ps mastered the content and the structure of a weather report.	**A clear observation focus helps teachers provide objective & specific feedback.**
15′	2. Teacher discusses the answers with the pupils. In the process, draw their attention to the cohesion among sentences and paragraphs.	powerpoint	T scaffolded the content and the structure of a weather report with Ps systematically and provided appropriate feedback.	

2. Emergence of shared beliefs and practices within the learning community

The training workshops and the inter-school activities have offered ample opportunities for learning and application. Apart from the growth of individual members in different aspects of CLD, some shared beliefs and practices in this professional community have emerged. Below are some observations from the inter-school lesson observation activities conducted by four member schools.

- There was a shared understanding of what quality learning and teaching should be like. The post-observation discussions focussed on the acceptable standards of learning with respect to the teaching objectives set and the characteristics of the students, and the scaffolding process required to help students achieve those standards.
- There were shared routines for practice. For instance, all host teachers made the necessary preparation and coordination before the LO and members adopted the agreed protocol in conducting LO. These enabled the professional exchanges to be conducted efficiently and effectively.
- The practice of using evidence to discuss students' progress and improve teaching has been established. With the help of the lesson observation tool which provided clear focusses for observation and note-taking, teachers were able to offer objective and elaborate feedback/comments on the process and the outcome based on data gathered from the lesson. Members have adopted an open and reflective attitude in sharing problems, giving feedback and responding to others.

- All CLN members acted on the belief that improving student learning is a collective responsibility. The discussions were centred on recognising students' achievements and working out strategies to help different learners, the weaker ones in particular, to learn better. There were instances when worksheets were examined and members' discussion was focussed on how to help particular students who failed to master the key learning objectives of the lesson.

Concluding remarks

On reflection, the positive development of the members and the network could be attributed both to the appropriateness and effectiveness of the workshops organised and the members' willingness to engage in this type of professional development. Apart from the high ratings given (around 4.5 out of 5) for each event, members were able to articulate similar learning (e.g. a curriculum leader is also a moral leader, writing curriculum plans involves a careful thinking process, the adoption of a lesson protocol is conducive to the promotion of a non-threatening peer learning atmosphere). This shared understanding and learning is an important step towards developing shared practices in a professional community. The next step is to help individual members to foster a professional community within their schools so that improvement of learning and teaching can be sustained.

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Christian Alliance SY Yeh Memorial Primary School
King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No.2
Kwai-Ming Wu Memorial School of the Precious Blood
Shatin Tsung Tsin School
SKH Chu Oi Primary School
SKH Holy Spirit Primary School
SKH Tsing Yi Estate Ho Chak Wan Primary School
TWGHs Li Chi Ho Primary School
Wo Che Lutheran School
Betty LEUNG (Language Support Officer)
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Cecilia CHU (Language Support Officer)
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Is procurement of professional services a mere administrative task or more?

Background

In the article entitled "Effective use of funding to effect educational changes" which was published in the last issue of The Language Teaching Album: A Collection of School-based Practices, we learned that most secondary schools used the English Enhancement Grant (EEG) to employ extra staff, to buy services from outsourced providers and to purchase additional teaching and learning materials. We also looked at the difficulties schools encountered in the planning, implementation and evaluation (PIE) process. In that article, a few cases illustrating how schools put the resources into effective use (e.g. through drawing up a holistic English enhancement plan and strategic deployment of the released teachers) to bring about developments in the school, the curriculum, the teachers, as well as in student learning were detailed. In this issue, we will take a closer look at how schools procure professional services to improve teaching and learning as this is a common feature of the EEG proposals of many secondary schools, and may constitute a large percentage of the total amount of money allocated to a school.

Based on our observation of how schools use this grant, service providers are typically deployed to:

- provide professional development training to teachers;
- develop resource packages for schools and conduct lessons;
- build e-learning platforms for schools;
- stage or help schools organise drama performances as part of the formal or informal curriculum;
- run one-off activities or programmes for students e.g. English Camp, English Day.

Difficulties encountered and strategies used

Regardless of the type of service hired, many teachers reflected that schools experienced difficulties of different scales and degrees of complexity at different stages in the procurement process. To cope with these problems, a range of strategies was tried out at schools. These are summarised in the table below:

Stage I. Before selecting the service providers (Pre)	
Difficulty encountered	**Coping strategy**
• Unsure what programmes/services to buy	- Conduct thorough needs analysis to identify what the school needs
• Not knowing how to look for the potential service providers	- Read the pamphlets and booklets sent in by the service providers - Do an Internet search - Ask around and rely on word of mouth
• Not knowing what to ask for or how to communicate the school's expectations to the potential service providers	- Work out what expectations and requirements to set for the outsourced programmes by learning about the subject matter and through discussion with colleagues - Formulate a service/programme specification before inviting bids for a service

• Unsure how to select appropriate service providers e.g. what aspects to consider and compare	- Use a comparison table to analyse the suitability of different service providers offering the programme during the selection process; things to compare may include the course design, quality of course materials, the company's work experience with schools in Hong Kong, etc.
Stage II: Dealing with the service providers chosen (While)	
Difficulty encountered	**Coping strategy**
• Low quality of the hired service e.g. frequent change of tutors, tutors lacking experience in teaching and classroom management	- Release a teacher to be in charge of monitoring the running of the programme - Arrange for teachers to sit in the lessons conducted - Establish a mechanism whereby teachers can immediately report any irregularities spotted
• Divergence of expectations between the school and the service providers (e.g. in material development and lesson arrangements)	- Strengthen communication between the school and the service providers by applying communication and negotiation skills strategically
• Lack of ownership of the outsourced programmes	- Use a work plan to clearly define the roles of the teachers and the service providers - Involve the implementors (i.e. the school teachers) in the PIE cycle
• No idea of when and how to monitor and evaluate	- Establish an evaluation mechanism to monitor the process and the product - Work out measurable and observable output targets - Use appropriate qualitative/quantitative methods to track student performance to ensure the quality of the programmes
Stage III: After the service providers are gone (Post)	
Difficulty encountered	**Coping strategy**
• Unsure how to sustain the programmes once the providers are gone	- Require the service providers to produce resource packages that consist of teacher's menu, teaching materials and worksheets - Review, modify and integrate the outsourced programmes into the regular school programme - Make sure at least one teacher who has undergone the process stays in the respective level to lead the other teachers - Have documentation of and ensure easy access to the learning and teaching materials, video-clips of professional development activities, correspondence with service providers for teacher use

School practices

What follows is an illustration of how several secondary schools used some of the coping strategies mentioned above to address the problems emerging at different stages of the procurement process.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Stage I: Before selecting the service providers (Pre)</th></tr>
<tr><th>Strategy used</th><th>Implementation detail</th></tr>
<tr><td>Conduct thorough needs analysis to identify what the school needs</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>HOW?</th><th>Year 1</th><th>Year 2</th><th>Year 3</th><th>Year 4</th><th>Year 5</th><th>Year 6</th></tr>
<tr><td>Developing a holistic school-based English curriculum, teaching materials and assessment practices with focus on preparing students for NSS language arts and non language arts electives</td><td>Focuses:
Poems and songs</td><td>Focus:
Short stories</td><td>Focus:
Pop culture</td><td colspan="3">Focuses:
- Continuation of Language Arts curriculum after being reviewed
- Non Language Arts electives which include Social Issues and Workplace English</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="6">Employing a GM English teacher to take up some English lessons so as to create space for teachers
- to have collaborative lesson planning
- to build up the school based teaching materials
- to develop and evaluate the curriculum
Employing a teaching assistant to assist teachers to
- to help teachers develop school based teaching materials
- to customize, review, revise and manage school-based teaching materials database for the New Senior Curriculum
- to assist teachers to develop and evaluate the curriculum</td></tr>
<tr><td>Equipping teachers to take up challenges of NSS</td><td>Focus:
1. Poetry</td><td>Focuses:
1. Short Stories
2. Drama</td><td>Focuses:
1. Pop Culture
2. Movies</td><td colspan="3">Focuses:
- Social Issues and Debate
- Non Language Arts electives</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="3">Teachers take the Longman Teachers Workshops to
- Receive professional training in teaching the NSS electives
- Gather ideas in developing school based teaching materials related to the NSS curriculum.</td><td colspan="3">Teachers take courses on non language arts electives offered by other service providers</td></tr>
</table>

In the EEG plan shown above, we can see that the school used the money to prepare both students and teachers for the NSS challenges. The school integrated Language Arts (LA) into the junior secondary curriculum from Year 1 to Year 3. This was followed by non-LA electives in the senior forms from Year 4 onwards. Teachers' capacity was built up through developing materials, designing lessons and implementing them in the classroom in addition to participation in workshops.

Such an arrangement took into account both the internal situations and external challenges. At the time when the EEG was open for application in 2006, the NSS was the hot topic among schools. Teachers therefore capitalised on this resource to help them cope with this external challenge. They wanted to kick off with LA because they had accumulated some experience teaching short stories and using songs and poems in their teaching. It was also their belief that LA appeals to students in the junior levels. When students' language proficiency is not yet firmly established, it is important to work on their interest and creativity. As they proceed to higher forms, they can then engage in non-LA electives which require more critical thinking and higher proficiency levels.

After conducting needs analysis, the school was able to identify the direction to work towards. They could then look for the service providers to empower teachers in the areas they had chosen to focus on.</td></tr>
</table>

Work out what expectations and requirements to set for the outsourced programmes by learning about the subject matter and through discussion with colleagues

Formulate a service/programme specification before the bidding process

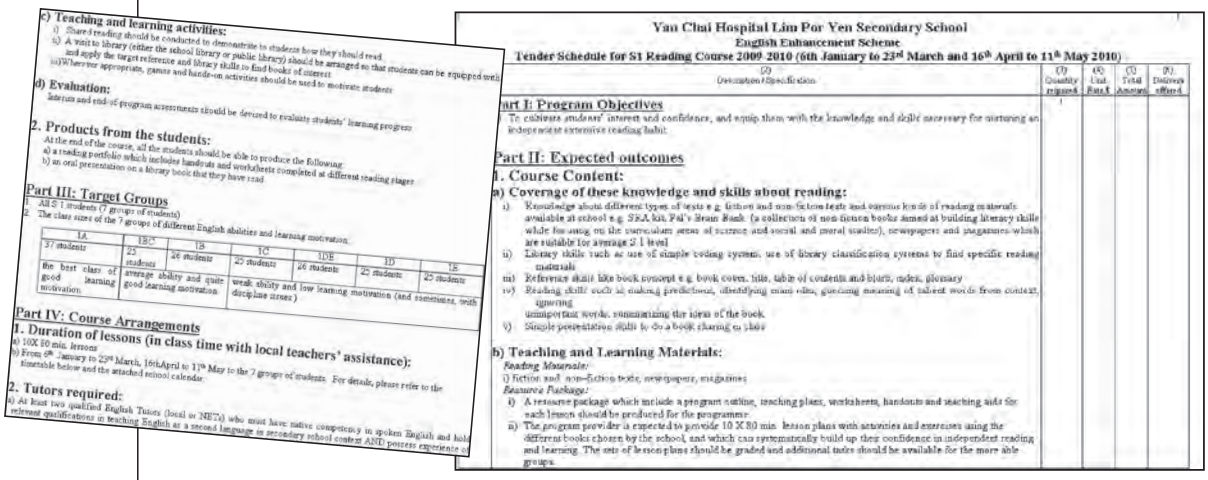
When planning for the outsourced programme on extensive reading at S1, teachers agreed on the programme objectives to ensure its alignment with the regular school-based curriculum and students' learning needs. With the planned programme objectives in mind, teachers familiarised themselves with the topic by reading some reference materials from different sources (e.g. the Curriculum Guide). They also identified the key components needed for the programme in form meetings:

- some essential knowledge and skills to cover (e.g. knowledge about a small range of fiction and non-fiction texts, library and reference skills);
- some core learning activities to incorporate (e.g. a library visit);
- the target learning products to aim for (e.g. a written summary of the book read followed by an oral presentation);
- the preferred modes of evaluation.

In the planning process, teachers also worked out the details of some specific course arrangements that they wanted to ask for from the service providers:

- grouping of the target students (e.g. 5 S1 classes streamed into 7 groups of students);
- duration of the programme (e.g. 10 double lessons);
- the qualifications and teaching experience of the tutors required (e.g. Degree-holders with TESOL qualifications and secondary school teaching experience in Hong Kong);
- contingency plans from the service provider setting out how underperformance would be dealt with.

The teacher-in-charge then drew up a school-based programme specification and sent it to the service providers interested in bidding for the service. A clear programme specification helped ensure that the school could get a tailor-made programme that addressed its needs rather than a standard one offered to all schools in the territory buying the same service.



c) Teaching and learning activities:

i) Shared reading should be conducted to demonstrate to students how they should read.

ii) A visit to library (either the school library or public library) should be arranged so that students can be equipped with and apply the target reference and library skills to find books of interest.

iii) Where appropriate, games and hands-on activities should be used to motivate students.

d) Evaluation:

Interim and end-of-program assessments should be devised to evaluate students' learning progress.

2. Products from the students:

At the end of the course, all the students should be able to produce the following:

a) a reading portfolio which includes handouts and worksheets completed at different reading stages

b) an oral presentation on a library book that they have read.

Part III: Target Groups

1. All S 1 students (7 groups of students)

2. The class sizes of the 7 groups of different English abilities and learning motivation:

1A	1BC	1E	1C	1DE	1D	1E
37 students	25 students	26 students	25 students	26 students	25 students	25 students
the best class of good learning motivation.	average ability and quite good learning motivation	weak ability and low learning motivation (and sometimes, with discipline issues)				

Part IV: Course Arrangements

1. Duration of lessons (in class time with local teachers' assistance):

a) 10X 80 min. lessons

b) From 6th January to 23rd March, 16thApril to 11th May to the 7 groups of students. For details, please refer to the timetable below and the attached school calendar.

2. Tutors required:

a) At least two qualified English Tutors (local or NETs) who must have native competency in spoken English and hold relevant qualifications in teaching English as a second language in secondary school context AND possess experience in

Yau Chai Hospital Lim Por Yen Secondary School

English Enhancement Scheme

Tender Schedule for S1 Reading Course 2009-2010 (6th January to 23rd March and 16th April to 11th May 2010)

(J) Description/Specification	(K) Quantity required	(L) Unit Rate $	(M) Total Amount	(N) Discount offered
art I: Program Objectives				
i. To cultivate students' interest and confidence, and equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for nurturing an independent extensive reading habit:				
Part II: Expected outcomes				
1. Course Content:				
a) Coverage of these knowledge and skills about reading:				
i) Knowledge about different types of texts e.g. fiction and non-fiction texts and various kinds of reading materials available at school e.g. SRA kit, Pal's Beam Bank (a collection of non-fiction books aimed at building literacy skills while focusing on the curriculum areas of science and social and moral studies), newspapers and magazines which are suitable for average S 1 level				
ii) Library skills such as use of simple coding system, use of library classification systems to find specific reading materials				
iii) Reference skills like book concept e.g. book cover, title, table of contents and blurb, index, glossary				
iv) Reading skills such as making predictions, identifying main idea, guessing meaning of salient words from context, ignoring unimportant words, summarizing the ideas of the book.				
v) Simple presentation skills to do a book sharing in class				
b) Teaching and Learning Materials:				
Reading Materials:				
i) fiction and non-fiction texts, newspapers, magazines				
Resource Package:				
i) A resource package which include a program outline, teaching plans, worksheets, handouts and teaching aids for each lesson should be produced for the programme.				
ii) The program provider is expected to provide 10 X 80 min. lesson plans with activities and exercises using the different books chosen by the school, and which can systematically build up their confidence in independent reading and learning. The sets of lesson plans should be graded and additional tasks should be available for the more able groups.				

A service specification drawn up by a school stating their expectations and requirements of the outsourced reading programme

Use a comparison table to analyse the suitability of different service providers offering the programme during the selection process

Understanding that due consideration should be given to the comparison between the price and quality of the hired services when selecting the right service provider, the English panel head of a school devised a comparison table to analyse the suitability of different service providers offering the S2 writing programme. Apart from including the cost of the programme as a factor for consideration in the selection process, that school-based tool comprised several other major reference points to assess the quality of the proposed programmes. Listed below are some of the important factors that teachers considered when vetting the quality of the tender documents (e.g. course outlines) submitted to school:

Factor	Example of selection criteria
Course design of the proposed programmes	- Alignment of the proposed course design (in particular, the objectives, lesson content and assessment methods) with the programme specification laid down by the school
Quality of the sample course materials sent to the school	- Relevance of the topic to the programme needed - A considerable amount of coverage of essential knowledge and skills - Appropriate level of difficulty - Level of interest - Provision of supportive measures to cater for student diversity (e.g. graded materials)
Previous work experience of the service providers	- Possessing practical school experience in running similar programmes in the local context - Satisfaction with the services provided to the school in the past

Yan Chai Hospital Lim Por Yen Secondary School
Theme-based Writing Course for S2 Students
Comparison Table /Tender Summary

Domains \ Supplier					
1. Course Design: Alignment with the planned objectives	✓ Clear and well-designed	✓ Clear and well-designed	× Not mentioned	× Relevant one is not given	✓ 10 different genres are suggested, kinesthetic approach, multi- modality
2.Course Material: a) Provision of (sample) tailored-made course outline for our students of different levels of abilities	✓ Requirements promised	✓ Various topics given, but not theme based	× Only a brochure of the possible services, not relevant to our specifications	✓ Provided	✓ Course outline is given.
b) Quality of (sample) teaching plan/ material	× Not provided	× Not given	× Not given	✓ But too advanced	× Not provided
3. Assessment of students' performance/ evaluation	✓ Marking & Evaluation report promised	✓ Only comments will be given and evaluation reports promised	× Marking of students' writing was not mentioned	✓ Samples of evaluation form/ questionnaire provided	✓
4. Company's work experience with our sch.	× No	× No	✓ Yes	× No	✓ Yes
5. Company's work experience with other HE schools/ students:	✓ Yes	✓ Yes (a long list)	✓ Yes Quite a lot (9 schools named)	✓ Yes (A very long list)	✓ Yes (in photos on back of sample magazine)
6. Tutor's qualifications: -number of tutors provided -relevant teaching experience in local context	✓ Very good qualifications & ample experience working with HK students	✓ Mentioned	✓ Mentioned	✓ Mentioned (in the brochure)	× Not mentioned

A school-based comparison table illustrating some major factors for consideration in selecting service providers

Taking the "quality" aspect of the outsourced programme into account in the selection process, the analysis in the comparison table enabled teachers to write up their justifications when the service provider offering the service for the lowest price was not chosen.

Stage II: Dealing with the service providers chosen (While)	
Strategy used	**Implementation detail**
Monitor the process by: - releasing a teacher to oversee the running of the programme/ course - arranging for teachers to sit in lessons as observers and facilitators - establishing a mechanism which enables teachers to report any irregularities immediately	In addition to hiring a service provider to deliver a drama programme for S2, the school also employed an extra teacher to take up some lessons of 3 teachers. One of the teachers was assigned to work closely with the drama service provider. Her duties included: - making sure the programme specification was translated into teaching units for classroom implementation; - conveying teachers' expectations and observations regarding the teaching pace, approaches and materials used; and - reflecting on students' learning progress and difficulties on an on-going basis, and then advising on how to make changes accordingly. The tutors sent in by the service provider were not substituting for the English teachers and so the latter had to be present in the classroom every time. These tutors possessed the expert knowledge of drama but since they were not language teachers and they only came once a week or cycle, it was important that English teachers were there to help as discipline teachers and also to clarify any language issues. In this way, immediate reporting to the teacher-in-charge was possible if any irregularities occurred. Teachers were required to fill in simple observation forms for each lesson in which they recorded information about the performance of the tutors and students. The teacher-in-charge would rely on these written forms and/or oral reports of her colleagues to monitor progress and take action if required.
Strengthen communication between the school and the service providers	In another school which procured the short stories programme for S3 from a service provider, they built in both formal (e.g. regular meetings and email) and informal channels (e.g. phone calls and chatting) for teachers to communicate feedback to the tutors. Strategic communication and negotiation skills were applied in the discussion process as the teachers liaised with the service providers and resolved conflicts. These skills include: - giving counter-suggestions rather than mere criticisms; and - making evidence-based judgement, e.g. analysing students' performance in homework and tests to tell how well they were able to apply knowledge and skills covered by the programme.

Involve the implementors (i.e. the school teachers) in the PIE cycle	In another school, the panel head knew it was unrealistic to involve all S3 teachers in the short stories programme run by a service provider from the start till the end. Instead, she drew the teachers in by stages: - reached consensus in the panel on what kind of programme was needed for the students (Planning) All teachers - communicated expectations to the service provider (Planning) Panel head - observed lessons delivered by tutors (Implementation) All teachers - gathered feedback from teachers on the learning materials developed and the teaching approaches used (Implementation) Panel head - collected evidence from students and teachers (Evaluation) Panel head All teachers
Establish an evaluation mechanism Use appropriate qualitative/ quantitative methods	In a school that procured services from a provider to run a Social Issues Programme for S4, pre- and post-tests were used to assess students' learning of this elective. In addition to that, teachers recorded their feedback in logs and reports. Besides these two, other quantitative and qualitative methods including surveys, questionnaires, interviews and students' work were used to track student performance. In order to monitor implementation of the programme, the teachers also carried out lesson observations and held meetings with the service providers.
Work out measurable and observable output targets	In another school which bought drama services for S2, the service provider devised the following output targets to assess the effectiveness of the drama programme and the performance of students: Portfolio Cover -- 10%; Character Profile WS -- 10% Radio Drama Presentation -- 20%; Self Reflective WS on Radio Drama -- 10% Blocking Presentation -- 25%; Self Assessment of the whole year -- 5% Portfolio -- 10% ; Continuous Assessment -- 10%
Stage III: After the service providers are gone (Post)	
Strategy used	**Implementation detail**
Review, modify and integrate the outsourced programmes into the regular school programme	Knowing that it is important for teachers to be able to run the outsourced programme on their own after the service providers are gone, a school made the following attempts to sustain the benefits of an outsourced programme run in the previous school year.

The two core teachers responsible for developing the school-based curriculum at S1 did a thorough review of the outsourced reading programme in the last summer holiday before they started their curriculum development work for the 2010-11 school year. Being the S1 teachers of the previous school year, they had undergone the PIE process of the outsourced programme and with that experience in mind, they reviewed all the course content and the materials developed for the whole outsourced reading programme using the planning tool, "KISS" (Keep, Improve, Start, Stop). They looked at the lesson content (with focusses put on evaluating the appropriacy of teaching particular concepts and skills at S1, e.g. usefulness and level of difficulty), the design of the worksheets and the activities used in the outsourced reading programme in order to decide what to keep, to improve, to stop and to start in the curriculum. In the review process, they also made reference to the feedback from other S1 teachers, which had been previously collected through a questionnaire survey after the completion of the programme.

YCH Lim Por Yen Secondary School (2009-10)
S1: Overall review of the outsourced reading programme (2009-10)

	Keep	Improve	Stop	Start
Lesson 1 Introduction to text types and the book concept	- *Materials:* (Wks on non-fiction texts) - *Materials:* Use authentic books	- *Content:* add magazine, cook book (non-fiction texts) and story (fiction texts)) - *Materials:* (Wks) 2 versions, the original for elite groups and the matching one for weaker groups		
Lesson 2 Reference skills		- *Objective:* not clear, need to define the objective, only reference skills are shown - *Delivery:* scan the cover and back of a book as example - *Activities:* design activities to test students' understanding of blurb etc, e.g. matching blurbs with different books	- *Teaching approach:* copying definitions form PowerPoint - *Activities:* writing blurbs on their own	
Lesson 3 Skimming		- *Materials: (Wkz)* re-sequence -- put P.1 to a later page.		
Lesson 4 Context clues	- *Content + Materials:* p.1 pictorial clues; p.2 & 3 ok	- *Materials: (Wkz)* Chinese meaning is acceptable on p.1 - *Materials:(Wks)* include open- ended questions? Can students handle them?	- *Materials: (Wkz)* make up the context clues on the last part	
Lesson 5 Context clues	- *Materials:* comic strips	- *Delivery:* should be improved - Materials: (Wks)WS: drawing, choosing of meanings instead of writing - *Materials: (Wkz)* some target words are too easy	- *Activities:* writing definition of difficult words - *Teaching approach:* independent reading	

The "KISS" tool used at a school to review the effectiveness of an outsourced reading programme before integration into the regular school curriculum

The two curriculum developers then used the KISS review data to inform their S1 curriculum development work for this school year. They tried to modify and integrate some of the content of the outsourced programme into the regular school-based curriculum. For instance, seeing that it was worth keeping the introduction to some common text types and the book concept which are two of the components in the outsourced reading programme, the two teachers incorporated those elements into the theme, "Leisure and Entertainment" covered in the regular curriculum. They improved the design of the materials by modifying the kinds of text types covered and by contextualising the concepts.

Concluding remarks

From the experiences shared in this article, we are able to draw key messages that schools should note when outsourcing services in the future:

Hiring of service providers is not the only way to develop a school-based curriculum, another possible way is to employ extra staff to release teachers for this purpose.

Bear in mind the 4 main principles when collaborating with the service providers: quality control, sustainability, coherence and knowledge transfer.

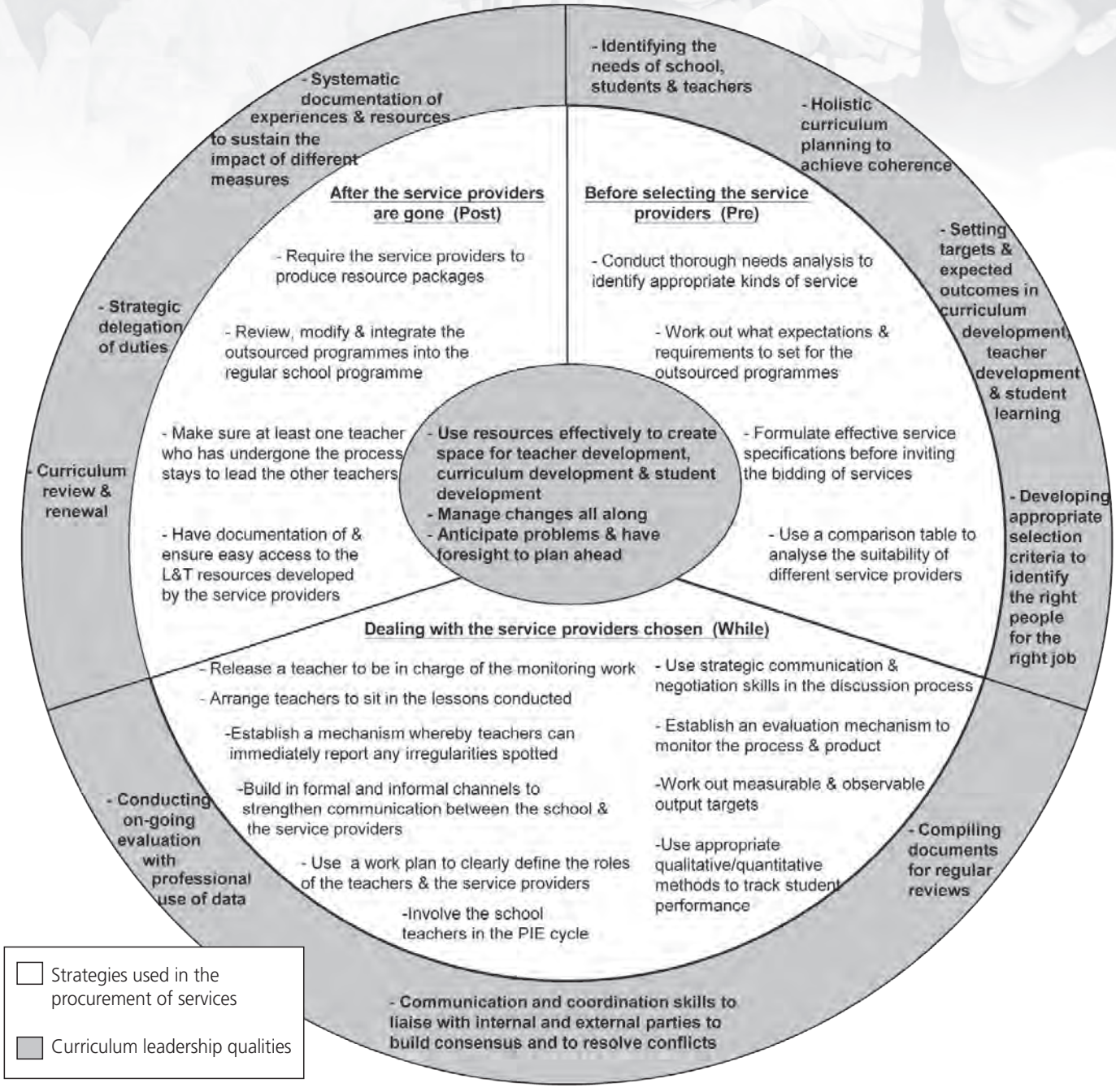
Avoid sole/over-reliance on the service providers. Teacher involvement is a MUST in the PIE cycle.

Service providers are not subordinates but working partners, so make sure you work together to bring about the most benefits for both students and teachers.

Create supportive conditions to facilitate effective procurement of outsourced services/programmes, e.g. through deploying staff strategically and agreeing on a reasonable number of programmes to purchase.

Nurturing curriculum leadership development

As reflected in the school-based experiences mentioned above, running an outsourced programme successfully requires a good understanding of the school's needs and detailed planning before selecting the professional service; significant coordination and monitoring work while the service is being delivered; and strategic follow-up work after the service has been delivered. This may pose great challenges to the language teachers but the insights developed from the whole procurement process will definitely nurture teachers' capacity to lead in future. Through planning, implementing and evaluating the hired services, teachers can develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills that are essential for a curriculum leader.



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