

Realising the vision of 334

15 July 2007

Other Learning Experiences: **A Catalyst for Whole-person Development**

“Other Learning Experiences” (OLE) are a key feature of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum. Schools will offer opportunities for their students alongside their core and elective subjects (including Applied Learning courses). At least fifteen percent of the lesson time of students will include learning experiences in

- Moral and Civic Education
- Aesthetic Development
- Physical Development
- Community Service
- Career-related Experiences

Together the core and elective subjects and OLE can achieve the goals set for our young people of balanced and whole person development. It has been asked by some people : *‘Why do our students need OLE in the New Senior Secondary Curriculum?’ ‘How does OLE help our students’ personal development? Would it hamper their ‘academic’ achievement?’*

From the perspective of the type of young adults our society, economy and culture require, post secondary institutions, employers and the community are looking for young people with broad horizons, positive work attitudes, a commitment to our society and country, and a capacity to collaborate with and to serve others, rather than some “exam-oriented elites”. These personal qualities can only be partially cultivated through subject or textbook-based learning. It will be the wider range of experiences envisaged by OLE which will deepen and broaden the curriculum for secondary students.

A Catalyst for Whole-person development

OLE embraces a catalytic function in promoting students' whole-person development as follows:

(1) 'Catalyzing' broad and balanced learning experiences

The essence of OLE is to enable students to obtain broad and balanced learning experiences through a wide range of exposures to develop diverse potential among individuals, such as their creativity, aesthetics, art appreciation, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, motor and sports skills, and caring. The Student Learning Profile will not only recognise students' participation and achievement in OLE but also positive engagement in both lesson activities and co-curricular activities. Quality learning, nurturing self-confidence and self-motivation in different aspects of life will be catalyzed.

(2) 'Catalyzing' sustainable personal development

Undoubtedly, 'Senior Secondary' is an important stage for our young people as they move through teenage life to become young adults. Many habits, thinking styles, personal and social behaviors are starting to be shaped during this crucial period. In other words, OLE could be regarded arguably as 'a seed for tomorrow'. They help students further participate in activities (e.g. Community service, arts, sports and cultural events) after they have left school when students could apply these skills and attitudes. In many cases lifelong passions are sparked by exposure and positive experience. OLE, in this way, could enhance the sustainability of whole-person development and chances of lifelong participation.

(3) 'Catalyzing' positive attitudes towards learning; complementing subject learning

Some people may comment that OLE will lower students' academic achievement. Overseas and local researches show these kinds of learning experiences not only help students' all-round development, but also contribute in improving learning attitudes and academic results. In many ways, OLE could create a unique learning 'space' which differs from subject learning. Without too much pressure, students are often found more likely to reflect deeply and enjoy the learning process. Such effects may 'wash back' to everyday classroom learning and will subsequently help raising achievement.

Issues during implementation

In fact, OLE is not new to schools. In the past, schools have been providing many opportunities of quality Life-wide Learning to our students. Building on such strengths, schools should flexibly plan and review different programmes and initiatives at different key stages. For example, it is worthwhile to align and link up different school-based development projects and activities (e.g. physical and aesthetic development, career guidance policy, moral and civic education programmes) to avoid unnecessary overlaps, under the 'quality matters, not quantity' principle. Schools should ensure sufficient structured opportunities for OLE and protect the prescribed learning time, rather than diminish it by giving over extra time to subject learning or examination preparation. The learning time allocation over the 3 years available for students is sufficient to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum that can be enjoyed by all students.

In whatever approaches to implement school-based OLE, schools should cater for the needs of students including those whose background might hinder learning. Schools should not think that the more expensive activities are necessarily more effective than those that cost less. Cost effectiveness should be considered when deploying resources for OLE, which should be organised within the school's timetable and calendar as far as possible. It is important to ensure all students, regardless of socio-economic background can take part in the various learning activities organised by the school.

From our past experience as educators, it is sometimes easy to say but quite difficult to fully realize our noble aim of education – '*Moral, Intellect, Physique, Social, Aesthetics*'. The formal introduction of OLE aims to enable the whole New Senior Secondary Curriculum to achieve these five essential Chinese virtues. The virtues are translated into our Learning Goals so that every senior secondary student can be benefited and help nurture future leaders so that harmonious society can be sustained.

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