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Special Issue:

Comprehensive School Guidance & Study Opportunities in Japan

Starting Late but Flying High – Japan’s Unique Experience in Stepping Up Student Support Services with a Whole-school Approach

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✿ Introduction

Upon the invitation of the University of Hiroshima, a delegation from Hong Kong was invited to join a study visit, from March 3 to March 9 2013. The delegation comprised 13 people from the Educational Bureau, the Hong Kong Baptist University, the Hong Kong Institute of Education, the Hong Kong Association for School Discipline and Counseling Teachers, the Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters and three secondary schools. We, as representatives from the Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters and two Hong Kong secondary schools, were honoured to have the chance to be part of the delegation.



The study visit consists of visits to four schools (one elementary, one junior high and one high), a two-day symposium, a prefectural level academic seminar on student problems in Japan and a district-based seminar on sharing of good practices. It was encouraging to see though Japan has got a rather late start of implementing a school-wide guidance program, they bear remarkable fruits and progress.

A team of academics and guidance personnel paid a visit to Hong Kong about two years ago. During their visit, they learnt a great deal from Hong Kong's experience and the US Comprehensive Guidance model. After that, the returnees initiated a collaboration project with the Hiroshima Board of Education and the two-day symposium, held at Hijiya University, was a highlight of what they had achieved in the past three years. This new Japanese model, basically derived from the comprehensive guidance model in Missouri, involves some localization and indigenization of the US one to fit in the Japanese context. Now, cases of school refusal and bullying have remarkably dropped in Hiroshima.

If Hong Kong is renowned as a shopping paradise for tourists, no one would deny that Japan is the heaven of eating sashimi and raw seafood. But for education, many people may still have a very strong impression on the role of homeroom teachers from a very hit Japanese TV drama, the Queen's Classroom shown a few years ago. Homeroom teachers shouldered up high responsibilities on teaching as well as pastoral care which includes students' learning, behavioral and emotional problems, personal and social issues and also their articulation pathways. Guidance and career guidance were embedded in work of homeroom teachers. In fact it is still the scenario of many Japanese schools.

Brian LEE, former Principal Inspector of the Guidance & Discipline Section, Education Bureau, also remarked that there had been a great improvement ever since he visited the country five years ago. Their top-down approach with a firm belief and strong leadership has inspired us a lot.

School visits cum seminar in Soja City on good school practices

The Hong Kong delegation visited 2 schools in Hiroshima City of Hiroshima Prefecture on 5 March and 2 schools in Soja City of Okayama Prefecture on 8 March.

Kannon Middle School (観音中学校) in Hiroshima City used to be one of the least preferred middle schools in the city. In the past, Kannon Middle School was ailed by all kinds of student behavioral problems like school refusal, bullying, vandalism, violence, etc. There were a few incidents where the students attacked the teachers. However, what we saw in our visit was an efficient school with smooth lessons and attentive students. Kids greeted guests politely and enjoyed their learning. According to Principal NAKAYAMA, over the past years, their ranking escalated from 63th to 16th out of all 64 middle schools in Hiroshima City. NAKAYAMA attributed the evolution to the hard work of the whole teaching staff, '9 years ago our guidance

teacher collapsed at work and almost quitted his job. Then all teachers began to realize that it was not the responsibility of a single teacher but everyone to bring the school back to the right track.'



(Above) A vibrant Secondary 2 Math class in Kannon Middle School.



(Right) A notice board filled with positive messages at the entrance of the school

In the spirit of ‘creating a school that everyone wants to attend’, the teachers first focused on building a positive atmosphere by giving attention to students who were eager to learn. Meanwhile, teachers invited those who wandered around the campus to get back to the classrooms. Trouble makers who interrupted lessons were asked to ‘stay away’ so as not to disturb others, and slowly they found themselves to be the minority of the school as the situation improved. Gradually, the school saw a ‘power shift’ – teachers began to take charge as they were respected while students started to listen to and follow teachers’ instructions. The school also considered that a lot of discipline problems arose from students who used to have discipline problems in primary schools. They came from different elementary schools and wanted to stretch their muscles and establish their power among peers. So Kannon teachers adopted an ‘early intervention’ approach. They visited elementary schools and introduced to the juniors the life of middle school students. Besides, they invited them to come to Kannon to join their school activities so that students from different elementary schools would mingle and know each other before coming to Kannon.

At the same time, Principal NAKAYAMA proactively communicated with the community like judges, personnel of the legal department and the police in order to let them better understand

the problems faced by kids nowadays. Consequently these people could render suitable assistance to the school. He also empowered the teachers who were very stressed by students' misbehavior. He praised their dedication of his colleagues without focusing on the outcome. From our observation, Kannon Middle School has now become a positive school with a strong humane ambience. Teachers care for their students and the campus is neat and tidy. Professor Shinji KURIHARA of Hiroshima University held Principal NAKAYAMA in high regard, saying that he is an outstanding middle school principal.

Hiroshima University High School (HUHS, 広島大学附属中学校・高等学校) is one of the top secondary schools in Hiroshima. With a history of over 100 years, HUHS is a 'research secondary school' supported by Hiroshima University's experts in education. Education research is conducted there and while good practices derived from those research projects are carried out in the school in the long run. According to our observation, HUHS has a strong commitment of developing students' talents and guiding them to search for their own aspiration and future. The brochure of the school carries messages like 'a place to find your true self', 'a place to enrich your abilities', 'discovering yourself' and '自分の色を見つけるステージ' literally meaning 'a stage to find your colours of life' – which echoes the advocacy of HKACMGM to promote individual student planning through discovering one's own interests and talents.



(Above) School Hall of Hiroshima University High School – a declared historical monument

In line with HUHS's mission to nurture students' motivation in their studies through diversified exposure, ample learning activities inside and outside their curriculums are provided to their junior and senior high students. The most prominent program is their Super Science High School (SSH). It consists of special lectures, laboratory visits, exchange programs with other high schools, science tours to visit latest science facilities and various institutes in Japan as well as students experiencing pioneer studies in science under the guidance of postgraduates and

researchers. This SSH program is franchised by the government and only a handful of schools in Japan have the qualification offering such programs. HUHS students (junior and senior) had a chance to do reciprocal educational visits with students in Korea over the past three years. Subsequently, HUHS has won awards for science education in Hiroshima prefecture for five consecutive years.



Career Guidance of Hiroshima University High School and Middle School

What also impressed the delegation was HUHS's initiative on career education. 'Career teachers' (進路老師) in a Japanese context only focus on the two transition periods of students – from middle school (初中) to senior high school (高中), and from high school to university. Their concerns are to help students prepare for the entrance exams and to choose the right schools. Nevertheless, HUHS's career education programs also shed light on the essence of individual students planning (ISP). Apart from conventional means like career talks and visits to universities and workplace, graduates are invited to write newsletters to share with current high school students their experience of making life-stage decisions and how they come to realization of their career aspirations.

Soja City of Okayama Prefecture is the seed city which has implemented the pilot comprehensive guidance programs advocated by Professor Shinji ISHII of Hijiya University and Professor Shinji KURIHARA of Hiroshima University for the past three years. The delegation visited **Soja Nishi Secondary School** (総社西中学校) and **Tokiwa Primary School** (常盤初学校). Both schools adopted a top-down whole-school approach which has cleverly embedded the four guiding principles of comprehensive guidance into their curriculum – **collaborative learning, social emotional learning (SEL), peer support and character education**. In Soja Nishi, each lesson across all classes and all forms (S.1 – S.3) put aside five minutes for collaborative learning activities every day. During our school visit, an S.2 English class put students into pairs to practise daily conversation. An S.1 Geography class put students into groups of three-four to discuss agriculture in Australia. The purpose is to ensure that all students have 30-minute collaborating learning experience throughout a school day in which

they can practise social and communication skills.



Character education programs in Soja Nishi Secondary School



Group work learning as a means to peer support in Soja Nishi Secondary School

As for peer support and SEL programs, Soja Nishi has a peer support workbook which lays down a total of 10 hours of curriculum time with themes across the whole year from S.1 to S.3. Moral classes, classroom activities, whole-person development activities as well as mainstream subject teaching go in line with these themes. A common practice to carry out peer support is to mobilize students of higher forms to teach or share with students of lower forms. For example, S.3 students teach S.1 students to play the recorders in normal lesson time and teach them how to do rope jumping in sports days. There are also many primary-secondary cooperation initiatives by which secondary school students share their experience of promoting from primary to secondary with Primary Six students so as to ease anxiety of primary students in face of transition. High school students also do the same for junior secondary students.

Character education programs also adopt a whole-city approach. A specific theme is chosen for a specific month (refer to table). Then all primary and secondary schools will stick to the same themes and carry out character building activities according to the timeline. In class-level, each student is asked to set his or her personal goals in those specific areas. We could find art work and worksheets of these personal goals are put up in all classrooms in both Soja Nishi Secondary and Tokiwa Primary School. Added to this, schools are given standardized promotional posters of these character education themes by the Education Ministry of the prefecture. These posters are not only seen in every corner of school campuses but also in the community, e.g. town hall, restaurants, groceries, bookstores, etc.

Month	Character Education Themes in 2012-13
March (beginning of school year)	Gratitude
April	Greeting
May	Sympathy
June	Responsibility
July	Conscience
September	Courage
October	Love to hometown
November	Independency
January	Resolution

Since the implementation of comprehensive guidance program three years ago, students of Soja City are reported to have scored high marks in national aptitude tests. School refusal and school withdrawal rates also see a significant drop in Soja City. During our school visits, both Soja Nishi Secondary School and Tokiwa Primary School were full of energy. Lessons showed extraordinary vibrancy. Students were cheerful and welcoming. We strongly believe the devotion of teachers to school guidance programs have paid off. We sincerely hope their good practices could be shared by all schools in Japan. We also look forward to more opportunities of educational exchanges with them in future.

❁ International Symposium on Student Guidance Programs in Japan

Net Problem

Apart from visiting various schools, we also had a chance to attend a seminar on youth problems in Japan and International Symposium in Student Guidance on good practices against school refusal and school bullying.

Professor Kazuo TAKEUCHI briefed us on net problem in Japan. The use of cell phones and smartphones has been on the rise among teenagers in Japan. As of April 2012, 49.6% of students were in the ownership of a smartphone. In fact, there was an increase of 12 times in only 19 months.

Cell phone ownership	Boys - 60.3%	Girls – 81.7%
Smartphone ownership	Boys - 47%	Girls – 55%
Emailing with those who they have never met	38.9%	
Meeting those who they have never met	81.4%	

The frequent use of such devices has brought the problems of encountering scams and receiving or requests for erotic photos. In the past, Japanese teenagers had to register when they bought and used a 'kagake' – a 'feature mobile phone' which was moderately priced but had additional functions over and above a basic mobile phone which was only capable of voice calling and text messaging. Therefore the government could come up with a white-list of websites that are suitable for teenagers, and a black list of websites that contained vulgar content. Then the blacklisted sites were blocked from kagake phones used by teenagers through registration and age declaration.

Mercifully, telecommunication companies also offer assistance by putting filtering systems in place to monitor students' internet activities and to scrutinise sites for cyberbullying. Therefore, such net problems have subsided for a while. However, with the emergence of wifi system, there is a comeback of the net problems because anyone can gain access to the internet without identity registration. The filtering system has lost its effect. Therefore, more remedial work is needed to nip the threat in the bud. Besides, educationalists urge teachers to pitch in resolving the problem with more discussion with students instead of their parents. After all, it is the teachers' duty to take the lead to seek help and rectify the problem with concerted effort with the stakeholders concerned.

Collaboration among Schools, Parents and the Community

Niigata City (新潟市) promotes the collaboration among schools, parents and the community. They believe this can tap into the resources of all the stakeholders to bring the best personal development for students. The Education Board there sends 'Local education coordinators' to visit schools in order to have a better understanding of their needs and then they will report to the government for future planning. At present, there are 158 schools in the city with each being sent 1 – 2 such coordinators who are paid by the government. There is an assortment of activities organized by the community and parents for students. Basically, they are run 4 hours per day and then 4 days per week. For instance, there are training sessions on interviewing skills for the admission to senior high schools, cooking lessons and English tutorial classes. More importantly, they strongly advocate "Play-after-school Project" with an emphasis on safety and health to nurture students' personal growth. Through the project, students will have a chance to meet local people in the community. Activities of such kind involve Japanese traditional plays and sports. At times, senior high school students also come to do sharing with students. While parents will rest assured that their children are put in a safe environment to gain extra-curricular exposure, students will learn to be more aware of the needs of the community.

Career Education

Career education in Japan has been a specific national policy since 2004. Students are involved in structured, practical activities as early as in the first to sixth grades like attending sharing sessions and talking to adults they encounter in their everyday lives. They are encouraged to think about the reasons why people work and start to think about life plans. In Niigata City, there is a monthly 20-min speech given by someone working in a field like an engineer or a cook. Besides, the highlight is the Work Experience Placement Programme for students to have a taste of working in workplaces such as convenience stores, hair salons, small factories or even hotels. In this way, children need to come into contact with members of their community, see what sorts of jobs are out there, understand how each profession functions and get to know how those in each profession work. It is not surprising that such a programme is also in place even in junior high schools. Students need to start to think about their own aptitudes and even career options after joining the programme. Such a kind of collaboration between the community and schools can strongly help realize the true value of career education.

Indeed, it is pleasing to see the concerted effort made by the government, commercial sectors and schools to harness educational capabilities in their own capacity. This can be seen from how the companies provide work experience placements to students and the collaboration from the telecommunication companies to block indecent materials for students' access. Perhaps Hong Kong should spare a thought on this way ahead as well if we are to bring an environment conducive to students' learning and personal development. After all, schools cannot do much without the support from the community and the outside world.

❁ The Practical Program of the School Guidance by the Multi-Level Approach

In 2007, two of our executive committee members, Esther Ho and Monica Cheng, were invited to join a study visit to Tokyo and they wrote two articles about the school visit experience. They found that career education was introduced in some schools at that time. With the aim of improving academic ability and addressing the concern of the deterioration of educational functions of families, local communities and the surge of youth problems including unhealthy lifestyle, bullying in schools, act of violence, youth unemployment and the increasing number of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or training), educators and people of municipality in different prefectures started to have different studies and research to meet the needs of students and achieve the same goals of the education reform. Hiroshima gave us a special impression for its systemic approach to introducing a comprehensive guidance programme which is modified based on the unique culture of Japan or even Hiroshima. This gives us a feeling that Hiroshima would soon become Missouri of the United States, a cradle of state-wide

guidance programme in the near future. In the trip, we saw the fruitful results in Hiroshima's first three-year pilot program in the symposium and conference in which over 140 participants from different prefectures of Japan participated in on 6th & 7th March.

The pilot comprehensive guidance program, namely the Practical Program of the School Guidance by the Multi-Level Approach, was introduced in the prefectures of Hiroshima (広島) and Okayama (岡山) in 2010 after the study group led by Professor Shinji KURIHARA of the Hiroshima University visited Hong Kong. Based on our observation, it would be a worthwhile project for the Hong Kong educators to make reference to when we consider having a review and change in the guidance programme at school. Below is a glimpse of the Practical Program of the School Guidance by the Multi-Level Approach.

Beliefs

The surge of students' misbehavior problems, particularly on schools refusal, bullying and even suicidal cases has affected learning of students for a period of time. With the system of homeroom teachers taking care of students' learning, personal, social and career development as well as their behavioral problems, more acute problems have mounted to an alarming stage as for heavy workloads of homeroom teachers and the lack of support from schools and other resources. Educators in Hiroshima thought it was necessary for schools to have a change to switch the approach from a remedial to a preventive and developmental one. With a common goal to provide a loving and caring environment for all students liking to go to, the distinct Japanese comprehensive guidance programme, namely "The Practical Program of the School Guidance by Multiple-Level Approach" was introduced in 2010.

Content

To create a school to which every student wants to go, the three guiding principles, 'Collaborative Learning', 'Social & Emotional Learning' and 'Character Education' have been laid in the foundation of the programme. These 3 key elements are inter-related and neatly underpinned in their programme. Schools are advised to integrate them into the curriculum with all subject teachers helping implement and a special team of teachers dealing with specific cases. Each school participated in the pilot program introducing these three elements differently according to their school backgrounds, students' needs and unique goals they wanted to achieve.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning – learning through group interaction with different structured activities helps students develop into active learners and fosters students' learning. In the project of Hiroshima, we could see schools focusing strongly on really the spirit of collaboration and

working on activities “together” to cultivate students’ attitude of harmony and being supportive in school. **Soja Nishi Secondary School (総社西中学校)**, the school we visited on Day 4, had a very structured arrangement. It was the school policy to include 5-minute collaborative learning activities in each lesson whereas there are 6 lessons a day and students would have at least 30 minutes every day for collaborative learning. We saw students having pair work on recording the dice numbers thrown to learn probability in a Maths lesson and students in an English lesson being able to seek help in different groups to ask about the pronunciation of words for some dialogue practice.



Pair work to learn probability



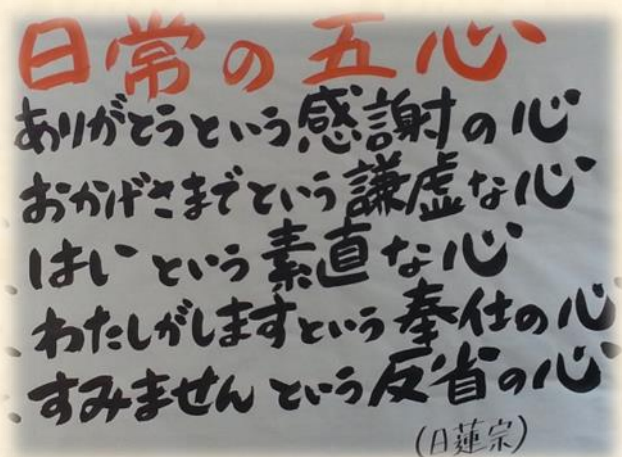
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) & Peer Support

SEL and peer support mainly focus on students’ personal and social development. They stress the socio-emotional needs of students and support given from senior students to junior students, from senior high schools to junior high schools, from junior high schools to elementary schools. For senior students offering help and support to junior students, it is quite similar to the scheme of ‘Big Brother and Big Sister Scheme’ in Hong Kong. Senior students would share their experience of study and problems they face in transition to the junior students in school while senior students would write to the students of the grade lower to encourage them and words with blessings would be put up to the notice board in classroom.

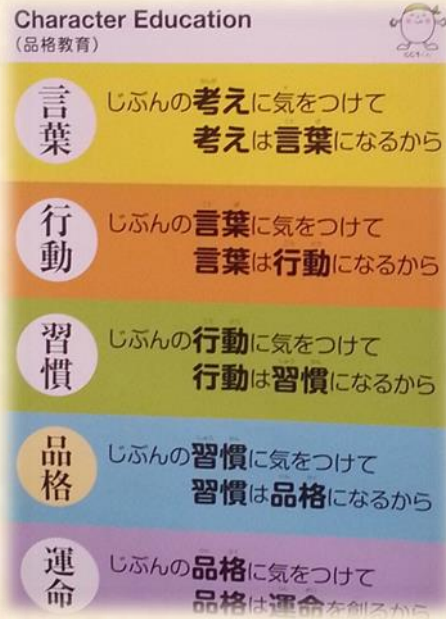
Senior students also helped organize different kinds of activities, like orientation programmes for the school new-comers to help them adapt to the new school life. Some junior high students would also go to the elementary school to tell their school life in the junior high school. These kinds of activities are carried out at all levels in school and the whole district. Caring and peer support are not only cultivated in schools but outside schools and in the local community.

Character Education

To cultivate a good learning attitude and personalities, good characters are promoted in the whole city from the Education Board of the prefecture. A good learning attitude is explicitly taught in the curriculum through lesson time and activities in non-class periods. During class time in our visit, we could see students in the junior high school learning Chinese calligraphy and the students in senior high school having lesson talking about Confucianism. Though the school curriculum including Chinese calligraphy and Confucianism was not explained for time constraint, we could be told from the courteous greeting from students and meticulous teaching of teachers the result of it. Other than lesson time, in 2013, twelve good character traits are introduced with one highlight of the character traits in each month. Flyers, posters and paper stands can be found everywhere in the schools we visited. According to the theme of each month, schools are encouraged to arrange different programmes to teach students the good character.



(Above and right) All kinds of posters on character education can be found along corridors and staircases on school campus



Delivery

The Practical Program of the School Guidance is implemented with a ‘Multiple-level Approach’ as shown in the diagram. In other words, it is carried out with a whole-school approach. Not only students with problems would receive guidance and support. On the contrary, the programme is for all students and they would receive different levels of training and support.

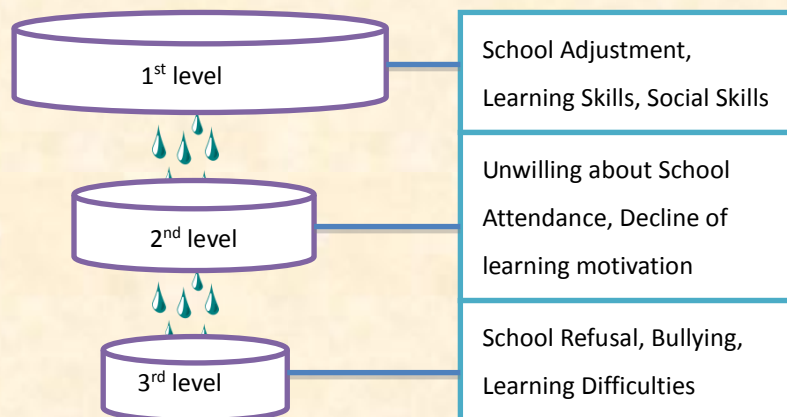


Figure 1: The Concept of the School Guidance by Multi-level Approach

At the 1st level, it mainly focuses on school adjustment for all new-comers especially in the transition from elementary school to junior high school, and from junior high school to senior high school. The three key elements, Collaborative Learning, SEL and Character Education are integrated in the school curriculum with a team of teachers manipulating the programme. As mentioned, a series of programmes or activities with the aims of helping school adjustment, training students learning skills and social skills, such as orientation day, experience sharing day,

‘Big Brothers and Big Sisters scheme’, fun fair and so on with the senior students helping the junior students are organized for all new students or students preparing to transit to the next level of study. Career education is also found integrated into the programme as well. Students are asked to set goals at the very beginning of term and write reflection on activities or different learning experiences. These are similar to the concept of reflection in our Student Learning Profile in Hong Kong.

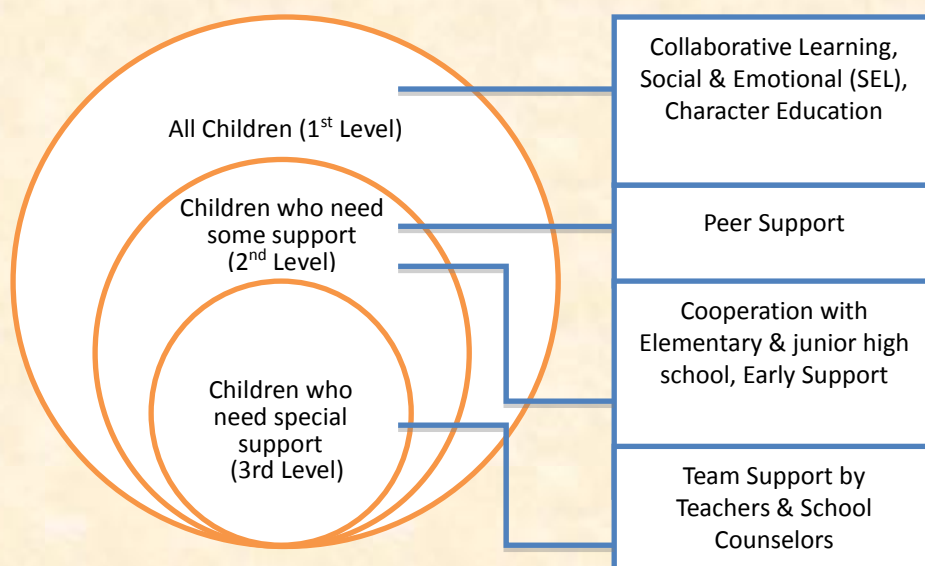


Figure 2: The Practical Program of the School Guidance by Multi-level Approach

At the 2nd level, with the view to solving problems of particular students who are unwilling to go to school, decline of the learning motivation, interventions are carried when those students are spotted and identified through different peer support activities.

At the 3rd level, programmes or support would be for students who are the ones of school refusal, having discipline problems such as bullying or being bullied or students who have learning difficulties. A team of teachers with a registered nurse and a special guidance teacher take care of these students. Students who are reluctant to learn or have special educational needs would withdraw from the normal class and have lessons with the nurse or a psychologist or a teacher who is trained to teach these students in a special room (Medical Room).



Management

In the project of “Practical Program of School Guidance by Multiple-level Approach”, homeroom teachers no longer work alone, a team is formed which consists of teachers of middle management, subject teachers, a counselor and a nurse. To make it the whole-school approach, the Board of Education and universities are working together to provide teachers with regular training while the universities are helping to do the evaluation of the programme and arranging meetings and seminars to exchange ideas among teachers from different schools.

Evaluation

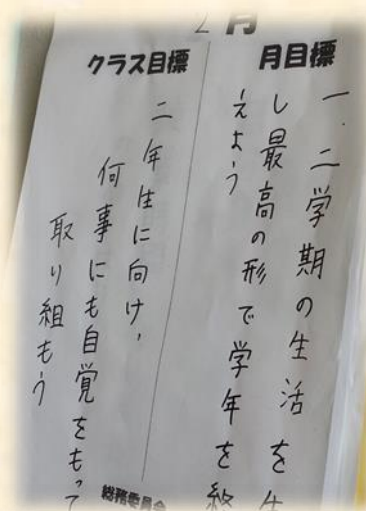
The 1st 3-year pilot project was evaluated by Hiroshima University this year. According to the research, several findings indicate that the programme was run successfully with the major change in decreasing number of the total absence rate at the junior high schools in Soja City and students’ performance in the Academic Achievement Test in Soja city was ranked in the first place in Okayama prefecture in 2012.

Implications

The visit this time allowed the Hong Kong delegates to witness the success of the implementation of the pilot programme in Hiroshima style, which is just like the Hiroshima-style okonomiyaki which is made with a unique recipe and cater for the taste of people in the Hiroshima and Okayama. The programme comprises academic development, social and personal development as well as career education. Its introduction also addresses the distinct problems and needs of Japanese students with Hiroshima distinct culture, desire for “peace and harmony”.



Students in a calligraphy lesson



Students set goals for themselves and for the whole class – to be put up in classrooms

❁ Celebrating the efforts of Hiroshima



In the afternoon of 8 March, a symposium gathering government officials, Hong Kong delegation, representatives from 19 schools in the prefecture, educators from outside the prefecture and the local media was held in the city hall of Soja City, Okayama. Four schools shared their work in the past year following a speech given by the head of the Municipal Board of Education. The four schools were Soja Chuo Elementary School, Ishin

Elementary School, Soja East Junior High School, which the Hong Kong delegation visited in the morning on the same day, and Soja West Junior High School. Each of them had their unique stories and it was really encouraging to hear them as so much love and concern for the students was reflected in them.

Facing school refusal problems, one of their common goals is to make school a warm environment, a place that everyone wants to go to and where everyone learns happily. To achieve this, relationship is placed highly. Through collaborative learning, students have a chance to communicate with one another and build social skills. And peer support is not limited to classroom and project learning. For example, students grow a plant to symbolize the support they offer to their peers and the idea of 'cherish your friend; cherish yourself' is spread. Also, when going to the pool, students hold hands and there is a long jump project that not only promotes sports but respect as no one shall laugh at others. Of course there are large club activities that students can join, too. It is believed that by supporting others, students' self-esteem can be raised too. On an individual level, there are occasions for students to talk about their achievements and tests to assess their strengths and abilities. There are worksheets to fill out and role-plays, which are ways to visualize students' situations. Helping students find their roles can definitely help them become assertive as well. So, senior graders have to behave like senior graders by helping and teaching the juniors. Perhaps this culture is actually central in Japanese society.

Other measures mentioned by the schools included identifying children who are confused and placing students with special needs in regular classes. And career guidance is present though it may not have received equal attention as in Hong Kong. Teachers will discuss with their

children what they want to do in future and individual planning that looks to students' future is closely tied to work that deals with what students are facing at present. To ensure teachers can play their role in counseling students, they are all trained and empowered with the skills. And the government, academics, professionals and the community partner with the teachers. Parents' involvement in Japanese school is particularly significant.

After the school sharing, Dr. Takashi YONEZAWA from Hiroshima University and Professor Kodama ARIKO from Hirosaki University of Health and Welfare gave feedback. Dr. YONEZAWA stressed the importance of positive reinforcement. He said each student could be the best and being a good person, each could improve the community. He also referred the participants to the Multi-Level Approach (MLA). The first level of support, including Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), character education and collaborative learning, is given to all students when they enter school, a time when they have to adapt to a new environment, face learning challenges and build new relationships; the second level of support is given when students' learning motivation lowers, then peer support is in place; the third level refers to teachers and experts' intervention when students refuse to go to school. The scale of support required for each level can go down from one to the next in this model. And Professor ARIKO reminded that teachers and counselors are a team working together and students need to feel comfortable to have the counselor walking into their classrooms. Hopefully the potential dropouts can be caught as early as possible.

The symposium's finishing note had the Hong Kong delegates and Japanese educators exchange their views and recognize the efforts Hiroshima University and the schools in Soja had paid for the young generation. Dr. Raymond Chan from the Hong Kong Baptist University made an impressive remark about the good discipline the Japanese kids demonstrated and the bright future he sees in the education in Japan.

With the concerted effort put by the municipal government, universities, all schools and even the support of parents, the taste of success in the 1st 3-year pilot scheme has laid a good foundation for the 2nd 3-year programme. We expect that a greater improvement of students learning and decreasing in numbers of discipline problems can be seen a few years later. It would be also a good vivid example for us to think now and reveal the students support or guidance programme in Hong Kong.

This study tour to Hiroshima actually started with a visit to her Peace Memorial Park. Hiroshima, City of Peace, has a special history and Peace Education is unique to her and Nagasaki. On every 6 August, students gather at the park to remember the past and Peace Education is in

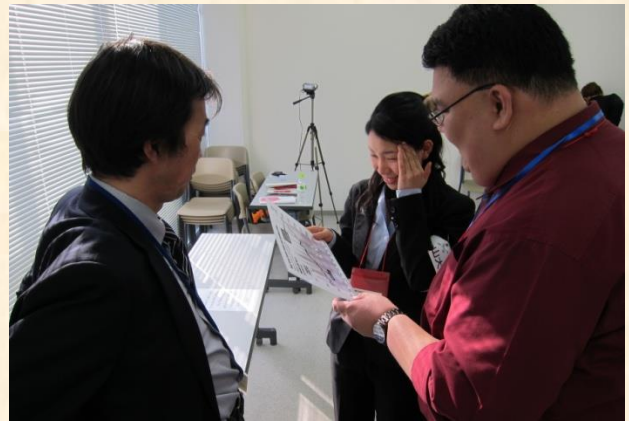
the curriculum from elementary school to high school, which upholds peace among individuals to peace between nations. This longing for peace is probably in the heart and soul of the people in Hiroshima and lays the foundation of the many initiatives in the education for her people.

✿ HKACMGM showcasing good work of Career Education in Hong Kong



In the International Symposium held on 6th and 7th March 2013 in Hijiya University, Exco members of HKACMGM delivered a three-hour workshop with the theme ‘Giving Positive Energy to Students through Comprehensive Guidance Program: Using Career Guidance as a pivot – from Policy to Implementation in Hong Kong.’ The workshop was attended by over 50 educationalists and counselors from all over Japan, together with other members of the Hong Kong delegation. We introduced our advocacy of career guidance, the position of career guidance under the comprehensive guidance model, and how career guidance and career education have evolved in Hong Kong in light of the challenges and opportunities brought by the new academic structure reform. We used Carmel Secondary School’s case as an example how career education can be implemented at different school levels. At the end, we demonstrated some essential activities in the career planning tools ‘Finding Your Colours of Life’ and ‘Career Mapping’ of HKACMGM for the audience.

The honeycomb party game and vocational card sort were well-received by the participants. At first, all the Japanese participants looked like veterans, stern and serious. When we were delivering our talk, they were all very attentive and jotted notes all the time. Yet, when we involved them in our career games, all of them put their guard down, eagerly participated and frankly shared their ideas. After the workshop, many of them came to us and thank us for showing them how career education can be done through lively activities.



(Left) Prof. Sumio MORIKAWA of Japan Peer Support Association enjoys the honeycomb party game
 (Right) Mr Joe TSUI, Vice-chairperson of HKACMGM, explains career theory to workshop participants

All in all, this journey was a very humbling experience for us. It brought us invaluable insights on the work of student guidance and career guidance from the perspective of another culture. We were so touched by the passion of Japan's academics and youth workers in search of ways to create a harmonious society where their kids can grow safely and be engaged in meaningful development. On behalf of HKACMGM, we would like to extend our heartiest thank to Professor Shinji KURIHARA of Hiroshima University and his team for their invitation and reception. Our gratitude is also extended to Professor Ishii SHINJI of Hijiya University, all the academics, educators and youth workers we met in Japan. We would also like to thank the Board of Education of Hiroshima City, Japan and Education Bureau of Hong Kong for arranging this wonderful learning opportunity for us.



HKACMGM representatives with Professor Shinji KURIHARA (middle), Dr Raymond CHAN (HKBU) (third left) and Dr Pattie LUK (HKIEd) (right)



‘So far yet so close’ – study opportunities in Japan – A visit to Ritsumeikan University (立命館大學)

Joseph TSANG

(Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters & Guidance Masters)



Many Hong Kong youngsters are very much into Japanese culture – comics, animations, video games, pop songs, movies, fashion... you name it. Perhaps for them, the dream of studying in Japan one day is ‘so close yet so far’. Apart from all the standard questions one has to ponder for overseas studies, such as financial concern, major of studies and its accreditation, adaptation to a foreign environment, Japanese competence is probably the biggest barrier. After all, the requirement of using Japanese to do serious studies, engage in high order thinking and present one’s argument is very different from that of playing video games or browsing random websites – a language level that not many Hong Kong people are equipped with.

✿ Global 30 – Japan universities offering degree programs in English

However, it is possible for Hong Kong students to enroll in a decent degree program in Japan without knowing a bit of Japanese. With the introduction of the ‘Global 30’ Project, 13 top universities in Japan provide undergraduate programs in a number of fields that are taught in English. In other words, students are required of no Japanese competence at the point of admission. This is the Japanese government’s initiative to help universities to ‘internationalize’ themselves through inviting more overseas students into their campuses. As the Japanese Government has injected a lot of funding into this project, only the best universities in the countries are chosen to provide these English-medium undergraduate programs for overseas students.

I visited one of the Global 30 universities situated in Kyoto – Ritsumeikan University (立命館大學) Kinugasa Campus in April 2013 and learned about their two English-based programs.

❁ Ritsumeikan University

Ritsumeikan University (RU) is an integrated academy with a rich culture of individuality and international awareness. As a private university, it has a long history of recruiting overseas students. Ritsumeikan has campuses in Kyoto, Shiga, Hokkaido, and Oita accommodating a total of 49,000 students. A new campus will be set up in Osaka in 2014.



RU is providing two English-based programs: Global Studies Major offered by College of International Relations and Community and Regional Policy Studies Major offered by College of Policy Science.

Global Studies Major was launched 3 years ago. Their first batch of students is currently in their third year. The program challenges students' views on international issues like governance and peace, development and sustainability and culture and society. Each year this 4-program has two enrolments – in April and September. Each enrolls 30 students, half of which are from overseas.

Community and Regional Policy Studies Major is a new program to be launched in September 2013. It exposes students to global challenges like poverty, population aging, urban development and environmental pollution. Then students are to clarify the causes of these social problems and explore solutions to satisfy different stakeholders of the society. Mr Matthew WORTLEY, admission officer from Office of International Student Services, recommended students who are interested in improving the lives of other people are to consider this program. It recruits 20 students and is to be launched in September 2013.



School motto of RU

Application

Universities under the Global 30 Project now offer paper and interview-based admissions procedures which allow international students to apply while still in their respective countries.

(RU closed their application for September 2013 intake on April 9.) Candidates have to submit registration form, application essays and letter of reference alongside with other standard documents like transcripts. Interview period is May. Applicants will be notified about their interview arrangements in late April. Interviews are conducted through TV conference systems like Skype. Results will be released in June. Successful applicants will then work on the application for student visas, which could take some time. The process should be finished in time so that students can go to Japan to commence their studies in August.

Requirements

RU does not have any minimum requirements of HKDSE subjects or grades for Hong Kong applicants. Nevertheless, applicants only have to provide proof of having finished their final year of secondary school studies. In order to demonstrate sufficient English ability, students must take English tests and achieve a score of at least the minimum by the time of application: TOFEL PBT 530/ TOFEL iBT 71/ IELTS (Academic) 5.5/ TOEIC 700. Nevertheless, students from a Hong Kong EMI school may be exempted from this requirement.



Support for International Students

In addition to excellent educational and research facilities, universities under the “Global 30” Project also provide an international student-friendly environment, offering support for living and studying in Japan. For example, they provide assistance regarding academic matters, career planning, visas, financial support and housing. For example, RU rents flats close to the campus and turns them into student hostels. Overseas students pay rents to the university directly for their accommodations.

(Left) Faculty building of International Relations at RU

RU is also very generous in terms of financial aids to international students. Scholarships are awarded before enrollment – 100% tuition waiver for top 10% of students in the first year, 50% for the next 20% of students, and 20% waiver for the rest. Other scholarships provided by the government are also available, such as JASSO scholarship of ¥48,000 per month.

All in all, it sounds very appealing that Hong Kong students can do a university major in a prestigious university, immerse themselves in a foreign environment and learn Japanese at the same time. However, while the entrance requirements do not seem high, admission staff of RU reminds potential applicants that the competition for international student places as well as

the competition in school work throughout the 4 years of undergraduate studies are quite keen. Application essays carry a lot of weight in the whole admission process. Students should also have good English competence as they will be studying alongside with international students who have English as their first language.

❁ Job Hunting in Japan and Careers Guidance of Ritsumeikan University



Display boards of career information on RU campus

Job hunting has become very tough for university graduates in recent years. In their good old days, when Japan’s economy flourished, life-time employment was the common practice across the country as companies could support a big staff and even could afford job-employee mismatch.

Yet, the collapse of Japan's bubble economy has forced companies to downsize. Only those candidates with ‘the right skills and the right personality’ will be picked.

Ms WATANABE, career centre officer of RU shared with her observation of the job market in Japan. “A candidate’s university major is rather insignificant when it comes to job hunting In Japan. Openings are offered by ‘companies’ but not ‘departments’ or ‘posts’. Therefore, personality and commitment are the key factors that employers are looking for from candidates, local or international students alike.”

On the other hand, various firms and companies are cutting the number of their recruitment officers (like PR department in Hong Kong). As a result, many recruitment officers have adopted a new approach of directly going to universities (more prestigious ones) to hold career talks for undergrads targeting for new blood.

In Japan, while a school term starts in April, university students in general begin their job hunting in December of their third year. Big companies will get their job enrolment decisions done in April while smaller firms by mid-May. By summer holiday, most companies will finish their recruitment.

Most job openings are open to all university students for application regardless of their ethnical background. There are limited job openings that are for international students who do not speak Japanese or could only master basic Japanese. In general, if international studies want to

stay in Japan to work after graduation, competence in Japanese language and good understanding of Japanese culture are the basic criteria.

Career Support of RU

Career Support of Ritsumeikan University ranks top among universities in Japan. They have 30 staff members in their career office in Kinugasa (衣笠) Campus. In total, there are 70 career officers working in all RU campuses across Japan.

In response to the demand of local job market, the support initiatives of RU Career Centre is gradually moving away from merely equipping students with job hunting skills to a more career guidance approach with a focus on personal reflection and exploration of one's aspirations. Students are guided to look into themselves and see what personal attributes they possess and how these qualities could match the cultures and expectations of their potential employers (companies and government organizations). RU College of International Relations also sees a growing need to raise their students' employability. Therefore, it also has strong collaboration with the Career Office and integrates this kind of 'self-reflection' exercise into their curriculum.

According to Ms WATANABE, there are many job hunting websites in Japan. Job openings offered by big household names could be found there. Students are also pretty familiar with these companies and therefore they will naturally pay attention to them. As a result, RU Career Office focuses on informing students of career opportunities offered by small-medium sized companies. They hold workshops in which career officers lead students to read news articles of the work of small-medium sized companies and ask students to comment on their work so that they will think seriously if they can relate to the missions of them and show the right kind of commitment to these companies in their job applications. Besides, RU has also developed their own job seeking webpage for students. Career counseling and mock interview services are also in place.

Acknowledgement

We would like to extend our heartiest thanks to Mr Matthew WORTLEY and Ms Jacqueline MA of RU Office of International Student Services for arranging the visit for HKACMGM. Our gratitude is also extended to Ms Yukiko WATANABE of RU Career Office for sharing with us their good work in career guidance for their students.



(From right to left) Ms Yukiko WATANABE, Ms Jacqueline MA & Mr Matthew WORTLEY